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ON EDGE: AN EXPLORATION OF
CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH
CERAMIC PRACTICE

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Ph.D.

2018

ON EDGE: AN EXPLORATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY
THROUGH CERAMIC PRACTICE

WEN-HSI CHEN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of Bath Spa University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Bath School of Art and Design, Bath Spa University

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Abstract

My project investigates the concept of 'in-betweenness' and uses a range of research methods including fieldwork and oral history interviews in Taiwan and practice-led work in ceramics.

Living away from my homeland gives me a clearer perspective of the culture in which I grew up, as well as an outsider's perspective of British culture. The cross-cultural experience provides a platform from which I can address the questions of who I am and how I might express and communicate my experience of in-betweenness as a place where I can survive - where I can draw breath to help me cope with the challenges of living in two cultures.

My research aims are: to explore the impact that living in a state of 'in-betweenness' can have on perceptions of self; to develop a visual language to communicate this experience; and to explore my own expression of cultural identity in relation to theory in the field.

My theoretical framework derives from Gayatri Spivak's work on colonialism and post-colonialism. Taiwan is a much-colonized culture and so Spivak's focus on everyday experience prompted me undertake a field trip to Taiwan in 2013 to gather supporting data. I interviewed 22 Taiwanese female ceramicists: 5 indigenous women living in rural eastern Taiwan and 17 women living in urban areas. The field trip revealed a significant difference between the urban and the rural women's ceramics (context, process and product) which, along with a growing awareness of Taiwanese social rituals, influenced my clay work. I could then create a bridge to a better understanding of cultural identity in my own research and practice.

My ceramic practice was developed in three main locations: Bath Spa School of Art and Design and during two artist-residencies in Denmark and Taiwan. I have exhibited my main ceramic works (Sculptural Spoons, 8 Hours, Fingerprints, Bananas, Traditional Chinese Characters) in different cultural environments and have been able to evaluate my work in response to visitor feedback.

This project develops the idea of practice as a form of research, combining field work, creative practice and documentation. It widens awareness and proposes new ways for other artists to explore the experience of being 'in-between'.

My principle research questions are:

How is my Taiwanese cultural identity expressed through making?

How might ceramic practice be used to develop a visual language to communicate a personal experience of 'in-betweenness'?

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Personal background and training.....	page2
1.2 Experience in the West.....	page6
1.3 Taiwanese ceramic history.....	page9
1.4 Research questions and aim.....	page11

Chapter 2: Critical context

2.1 Cultural studies.....	page14
2.2 The construction of identity.....	page22
2.3 Naming and cultural labels.....	page24
2.4 Negotiating identity.....	page29
2.5 Material culture and objects.....	page31

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction.....	page35
3.2 Fieldwork	
3.2.1 Oral history.....	page39
3.3 Practice	
3.3.1 Practice-based research.....	page48
3.3.2 Exhibiting.....	page50
3.3.3 Critical reflection.....	page52

Chapter 4: Research in Taiwan

4.1 Urban Taiwanese female ceramicists: Exhibition at PAPERArts, Bristol.....	page54
4.2 A disappearing culture - the Amis earthenware tradition in Taiwan: Exhibition and documentary film, Museum of East Asian Art, Bath	page69
4.3 Critical reflection.....	page88

Chapter 5: Creative practice

5.1 Introduction.....	page100
5.2 How have my field trip experiences influenced my creative practice?	
5.2.1 Introduction to the final work: Sculptural Spoons..	page103
5.2.2 Development of the work.....	page108
5.2.3 Critical reflection.....	page115

5.3 How have my perceptions of self been affected by my experience of being an 'outsider', living in-between two cultures?	
5.3.1 Introduction to the final works: 8 Hours and Fingerprintspage122
5.3.2 Development of the work.....	page130
5.3.3 Critical reflection.....	page145
5.4 Can I use Taiwanese bananas as a symbol to convey aspects of my cultural identity?	
5.4.1 Introduction to the final work: Bananas.....	page151
5.4.2 Development of the work.....	page160
5.4.3 Critical reflection.....	page172
5.5 Artist-residency in Taiwan	
5.5.1 Introduction to the final work: Traditional Chinese Characterpage174
5.5.2 Development of the work.....	page182
5.5.3 Critical reflection.....	page184

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 Research in Taiwan.....	page188
6.2 Constructing the thesis.....	page189
6.3 Creative practice.....	page190
6.4 Developing a visual language.....	page193

Bibliography.....	page194
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Appendices

Appendix 1: CV.....	page215
Appendix 2: A list of questions for Taiwanese female ceramicists..	page220
Appendix 3: Test diary.....	page225
Appendix 4: Forms.....	page241
Appendix 5: Example of an interview transcription.....	page262
Appendix 6: My early stage studio practice development.....	page264
Appendix 7: The Guldagergaard artist-residency.....	page282
Appendix 8: I am not Japanese, thanks and Rose petals.....	page291
Appendix 9: Feedback from Taiwan.....	page304
Appendix 10: Comment on Wen-Hsi CHEN's Exploring Taiwanese Cultural Identity through Contemporary Ceramic Practice....	page309

List of figures and tables

Figures

Figure 1.1: Six-House Street, Dadaocheng District, Taipei City, Taiwan (Source: Wikipedia http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Taipei_City_in_19c.jpg). Page 3.

Figure 1.2: Xiangyang Institute of Cultural Relics and Archeology find 27 ancient brick-chambered tombs in Xiangcheng District of Xiangyang, central China's Hubei province (Source: People's Daily Online <http://en.people.cn/n/2015/1118/c98649-8978488.html>). Page 5.

Figure 2.1: Can fingerprints be stolen from scissor hands photos? (Source: Global Daily <http://global.sina.cn/qushi/article/20170111/009662536f451000.html>). Page 25.

Figure 4.1: Exhibition poster (Source: Lucida Fang). Page 54.

Figure 4.2: Exhibition space (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 56.

Figure 4.3: Miao-Fang Lin. Tea ware with green and orange crystalline glaze, porcelain (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 57.

Figure 4.4: Yu-Chi Chiu. Pottery animal stone lion jar 鬪獅茶倉 (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 58.

Figure 4.5: Lan-Mei Tang's chicken family (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 60.

Figure 4.6: Jenny Chen, Taiwanese Miracle Rose (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 61.

Figure 4.7: Miao-Wen Zhou. Beauty (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 62.

Figure 4.8: Sophia Den, Nine Lives Cat Woman (Source: Sophia Den). Page 63.

Figure 4.9: Sophia Den. All I Want is Smooth Breathing (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 64.

Figure 4.10: Wen-Hsi Chen. Feeding (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page65.

Figure 4.11: Wen-Hsi Chen. My Homeland Taiwan (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen).
Page66.

Figure 4.12: Wen-Hsi Chen, Skin 皮膚 (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Pag68.

Figure 4.13: A Disappearing Culture: The Amis Earthenware Tradition in Taiwan
exhibition poster (Source: Poster designed by Museum of East Asian Art, Bath.
Photograph by Wen-Hsi Chen). Page70.

Figure 4.14: My research field trip film showing in the Museum of East of Asian Art
(Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page71.

Figure 4.15: The rock with a fragment of red brick (Source: Martin
Harman).Page72.

Figure 4.16: A fragment of red brick (Source: Martin Harman).Page73.

Figure 4.17: Photograph of women digging for clay (Source: Martin Harman).
Page73.

Figure 4.18: Lisin helped deal with the clay (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen).Page74.

Figure 4.19: Drying out clay in the outside space (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page74.

Figure 4.20: Pounding clay (Source: Martin Harman). Page75.

Figure 4.21: The pounding process is finished, they then prepare the clay for
making pottery (Source: Martin Harman). Page76.

Figure 4.22: Firing space (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page77.

Figure 4.23: Lakaw holding a ceremony (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page77.

Figure 4.24: Women helped each other build the outdoor firing (Source: Wen-Hsi
Chen). Page78.

Figure 4.25: Lakaw used newspaper to light a fire on the sides of the outdoor firing (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page78.

Figure 4.26: The finished firing process (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page79.

Figure 4.27: The Amis model of a vegetable steamer (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page80.

Figure 4.28: Diwas – ceremonial cup used for alcohol (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page80.

Figure 4.29: Tatolonan – used for steaming vegetables (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen).Page81.

Figure 4.30: Koleng – used for general cooking (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen).Page82.

Figure 4.31: Atomo – storage container (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen).Page82.

Figure 4.32: The exhibition space in the Museum of East Asian Art (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page83.

Figure 4.33: Lakaw's photograph (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page84.

Figure 4.34: Dogin's photograph (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page84.

Figure 4.35: Palos's photograph (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page85.

Figure 4.36: Lisin's photograph (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page85.

Figure 4.37: Byimu's photograph (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 86.

Figure 4.38: Ming-Hsiang Hsu. Uprooted, 73x 47x93cm (Source: Ming-Hsiang Hsu *Ancient Emotional Ceramic Houses*). Page89.

Figure 4.39: Ming-Hsiang Hsu. Hand in the Sky. 55x 30x76cm (Source: Ming-Hsiang Hsu *Ancient Emotional Ceramic Houses*). Page90.

Figure 4.40: Hsu, Ming-Hsiang with her 'Hand in the Sky'. 55x 30x76cm (Source: Ming-Hsiang Hsu <http://www.epochtimes.com/b5/8/11/3/n2317385.htm>). Page 91.

Figure 4.41: Mei-Hwa Chang's ceramic work (Source: Chang, Mei-Hwa <http://www.ceramics.tpc.gov.tw/zh-tw/News/Print.ycm?ct=2&pr=1231&Lang=TW>). Page 92.

Figure 4.42: Lan-Mei Tang. Build Up (Source: Lan-Mei Tang *The Tales of Flames*). Page 94.

Figure 4.43: Lisin used her knee to create the form of the pottery (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 95.

Figure 4.44: The Amis women used their fingers to make pottery (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 96.

Figure 4.45: The Amis used spoons or beach stones to help with the shaping process (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 97.

Figure 4.46: Lisin used spoons to polish her pottery edges (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 97.

Figure 4.47: The Amis handmade pottery tools (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 98.

Figure 5.1: Wen-Hsi Chen Sculptural Spoons (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 103.

Figure 5.2: My mother's wedding cups (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 104.

Figure 5.3: Wen-Hsi Chen. The Taiwanese wedding ceremony (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 105.

Figure 5.4: Different types of wooden wedding-cake mould (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 106.

Figure 5.5: Wen-Hsi Chen's studio photos (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 108.

Figure 5.6: The Amis used spoons or beach stones to help with the shaping process (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 109.

Figure 5.7: Lisin used spoons to polish her pottery edges (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 109.

Figure 5.8: The Amis handmade pottery tools (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 110.

Figure 5.9: Xiao Jing Yan. Bridge (Source: Xiao Jing Yan http://yanxiaojing.com/portfolio_pages/bridge/). Page 111.

Figure 5.10: Stine Jespersen's sculptural spoons (Source: Stine Jespersen <http://www.stinejespersen.com/Sculpturs>). Page 113.

Figure 5.11: Amis women used branches to build their outdoor firing kiln (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 114.

Figure 5.12: Wen-Hsi Chen's Sculptural Spoons (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 114.

Figure 5.13: Wen-Hsi Chen's Sculptural Spoons (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 116.

Figure 5.14: Wen-Hsi Chen Sculptural Spoons in the Holburne Museum (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 117.

Figure 5.15: The Holburne Museum's funeral spoon 1664/65 (Source: The Holburne Museum). Page 118.

Figure 5.16: Welsh love spoon (Source: Tim Bowen Antiques <http://www.timbowenantiques.co.uk/antique-archive/welsh-love-spoon>). Page 119.

Figure 5.17: Wen-Hsi Chen Sculptural Spoons in the Holburne Museum (Source: Susan Morgan). Page 120.

Figure 5.18: Wen-Hsi Chen Sculptural Spoons in the Holburne Museum (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 121.

Figure 5.19: Wen-Hsi Chen. 8 Hours (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 122.

Figure 5.20: Wen-Hsi Chen. Fingerprints (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 125.

Figure 5.21: Tues #2 (Source: Sabina Lang and Daniel Baumann
<http://langbaumann.com/>). Page132.

Figure 5.22: Time marks (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page133.

Figure 5.23: Wen-Hsi Chen's 8 Hours (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page134.

Figure 5.24: Sin-Ying Ho, Music (Source: Sin-Ying Ho
http://sinyingho.com/portfolio_3). Page136.

Figure 5.25: I used my fingers to create my fingerprint work (Source: Sea Maiden Photography).Page138.

Figure 5.26: The Identity (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen
<http://www.wenhsichenceramics.com/the-8th-gyeonggi-international-ceramic-biennale-icheon-south-korea-2015.html>). Page139.

Figure 5.27: Wen-Hsi Chen. The detail of my work (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen
<http://www.wenhsichenceramics.com/the-8th-gyeonggi-international-ceramic-biennale-icheon-south-korea-2015.html>). Page142.

Figure 5.28: Wen-Hsi Chen. The back of my Identity (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen
<http://www.wenhsichenceramics.com/the-8th-gyeonggi-international-ceramic-biennale-icheon-south-korea-2015.html>). Page 143.

Figure 5.29: Wen-Hsi Chen studio space in Denmark (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 144.

Figure 5.30: Wen-Hsi Chen. 8 Hours (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 146.

Figure 5.31: My sketch for 8 Hours (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page147.

Figure 5.32: My drawing about how to display my work (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page148.

Figure 5.33: My work displayed at 75° angles (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page 149.

Figure 5.34: My work displayed in the exhibition in Korea (Source: GICB2015 office Korea Ceramic Foundation). Page150.

Figure 5.35: Wen-Hsi Chen. East Meets West Bananas (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen).
Page151.

Figure 5.36: Sunflower Movement (Source: Sunflower Movement
<https://www.facebook.com/sunflowermovement/>). Page153.

Figure 5.37: The 'policemen' kicking students (Source: Ayo News
<http://myweb.nutn.edu.tw/~hycheng/1today/ayoNews2014Mar18act.html>).

Page154.

Figure 5.38: The policemen tried to move out students during the Sunflower Movement (Source: Ayo News
<http://myweb.nutn.edu.tw/~hycheng/1today/ayoNews2014Mar18act.html>).

Page154.

Figure 5.39: Sunflowers in the Sunflower Movement (Source: Sunflower Movement
<https://www.facebook.com/sunflowermovement/>). Page156.

Figure 5.40: Yi Qiu made a mistake that the sunflowers were Taiwanese bananas (Source: NDTV.COM
<http://www.ndtv.com/xtr/b5/2014/04/10/a1099412.html>).

Page157.

Figure 5.41: On a TV show, Yi Qiu said the Democratic Progressive Party (green party) were supporting the students (Source: YouTube
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aen8577gnVo&app=desktop>). Page157.

Figure 5.42: The combination between Taiwanese bananas and sunflowers (Source: kuso <http://www.taiwancon.com/123330/>). Page159.

Figure 5.43: A Taiwanese fruit shop started to call bananas sunflowers (Source: NDTV.COM <http://www.ndtv.com/xtr/b5/2014/03/27/a1090104.html>).
Page159.

Figure 5.44: Packing of bananas, Formosa. 1930 (Source: National Central Library http://memory.ncl.edu.tw/tm_cgi/hypage.cgi?HYPAGE=image_photo_detail.hpg&project_id=tpphoto&dtd_id=10&xml_id=0000362715&subject_name=台北市老照片).

Page161.

Figure 5.45: 卓有瑞, Yu-Jui Cho. Banana series: 7, 1975 (Source: Taiwanese Academy tw.taiwanacademy.tw/toolkit/index.php?option=com_arts&view=work&id=153&Itemid=349). Page162.

Figure 5.46: Ming-Huy Yan 嚴明惠 This is Art (Source: Victoria Lu http://www.ktpress.co.uk/pdf/nparadoxaissue15and16_Victoria-Lu_36-45.pdf).Page163.

Figure 5.47: Yi-Chun Lo. Banana Justice. 2014, Banana peels (Source: Lo, Yi-Chun <http://yichunlo.wixsite.com/artist/banana-justice->). Page165.

Figure 5.48: Wen-Hsi Chen's banana mould (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page166.

Figure 5.49: Wen-Hsi Chen. Taiwanese bananas 2014 (Source: Christina Freeth). Page167.

Figure 5.50: Wen-Hsi Chen. The white bananas (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen).Page168.

Figure 5.51: Wen-Hsi Chen. We all have our crosses to bear (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen).Page169.

Figure 5.52: My Taiwanese bananas in Bath Spa University library (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen).Page170.

Figure 5.53: Chen,Wen-Hsi .Taiwanese bananas (Source: Katrin Kamrau).Page171.

Figure 5.54: The Taiwanese bananas with my 'East meets West Bananas' (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page172.

Figure 5.55: The Language of Ceramics (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page174.

Figure 5.56: Superdry vintage logo hibiscus cut out T-shirt (Source: Superdry <http://www.superdry.com/womens/new-in/details/62550/vintage-logo-hibiscus-cut-out-t-shirt>).Page176.

Figure 5.57: What are you up to these days? Oh, being a meanie crime poet (Source: Buzz Feed https://www.buzzfeed.com/ellievhall/ridiculous-chinese-character-tattoos-translated?utm_term=.dfNYIEWp1V#.llWBBYZMYo).Page176.

Figure 5.58: The Chinese symbols, which were etched on in Hong Kong, translate to 'Death and life have determined appointments. Riches and honour depend upon heaven' (Source: *The Sun* <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/features/5106640/david-beckhams-34-tattoos.html>).Page177.

Figure 5.59: Xu Bing. Book from Sky. Print version and wood carved version (Source: Xu Bing <http://kaiak.tw/無人能懂的一本書-徐冰 xu-bing 《天書》 -2/>). Page178.

Figure 5.60: Wen-Hsi Chen. FUCK YOU (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen). Page181.

Figure 5.61: Me in the Yingge Ceramic Museum studio (Source: Martin Harman).Page182.

Figure 5.62: The making process I used was to write calligraphy using slip (Source: Wen-Hsi Chen).Page183.

Figure 5.63: I shared my ideas to engage with the audience in the museum (Source: Martin Harman). Page185.

Tables

3.1 Artist-residencies and conferences.Page51.

5.1 Research questions and creative outputs. Page 102.

Chapter 1: Introduction

My PhD, which is practice-led in ceramics, deals with the issue of cultural identity. My creative practice expresses the experience of living between two worlds: Taiwan and Britain. The language and cultural expectations are different between the West and the East. Western societies are based upon the individual, whereas Eastern societies are based upon the collective.¹ This creates a space between two cultures.

My practice aims to make this 'gap' visible so that people will have a better understanding of the position of living in the in-between. For me, 'in-between' is a place where I can survive - where I can draw breath to help me cope with the challenges of living in two cultures. However, it is an uncomfortable and ambiguous space - a place that has to be 'survived'.

Min Jeong Song explains that 'In-betweenness is a fluid concept that is in a transitional state: the state of 'becoming'.² According to Homi K. Bhabha, in-between space can 'provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood - singular or communal - that initiate new signs of identity'³. For me, the space allows me to adjust to, digest and express the tension inherent in the world I inhabit.

This thesis focuses on my ceramic practice and my supporting research work, which included a trip to Taiwan in 2013. This was an investigation into the social

¹ Goleman, Daniel. *The group and the self: new focus on a cultural rift*. 25th December 1990. [Online] Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/12/25/science/the-group-and-the-self-new-focus-on-a-cultural-rift.html?pagewanted=all> [Accessed 20 January 2018].

² Song, Min Jeong. *Mechanisms of in-betweenness: through visual experiences of glass*. Ph.D. thesis, Royal College of Art, 2014, p3.

³ Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. New York and London: Routledge, 1994, pp. 1-2.

context and attitudes of women working with clay in Taiwan and included traditional, rural, indigenous and urban women.

Over the course of the research project, I explored my sense of identity as a Taiwanese national living in Britain, through the creation of a series of ceramic works based on sculptural spoons, fingerprints, bananas, and traditional Chinese writing. I developed a language to explore my own situation.

I have discussed and shown my ceramics in a range of situations to encourage a wide audience to engage with my research. I have presented at conferences, given public talks and undertaken two artist residencies. I have shown in exhibitions and art fairs and used questionnaires to gauge audience response. However, it is a challenge to investigate audience response effectively. Therefore, the focus in this thesis is more on my ceramic practice than on audience studies. There is a tension between my personal situation. How much information should I provide in order to let the viewers explore and read my work? Should I rather let my ceramics speak for themselves and allow the audience to interpret in their own way?

I hope that this research investigation and ceramic practice development can provide a new perspective, offer a better understanding about living in two worlds and also develop a language as cultural bridge; this language is my ceramics.

1.1 Personal background and training

I was born in Taipei, Taiwan. My family still lives on the Yanping North Road in the historic Dihua area. Historically, there were many advantages to this area as it sold many products such as Chinese herbs, tea⁴, dried mushrooms and so on. For this reason, this area was popular with the Japanese government when they occupied

⁴ For more historical details, see Wu Zhen-fang Cultural and Educational Foundation *The Tea Story of Da'dao'cheng* (大稻埕茶物語), 財團法人吳振芳文教基金會. Taipei: Wu Zhen-fang Cultural and Educational Foundation, 2016.

Taiwan from 1895 to 1945. Additionally, this area was an ideal location for these items to be delivered to Japan by boat.



Figure 1.1: Six-House Street, Dadaocheng District, Taipei City, Taiwan.⁵

This historical background relates to my family because my family members ran a Chinese herbs business with the Japanese government so my childhood was infused with a strong Japanese cultural atmosphere. I spent my childhood with my grandmother who was born in 1928 and who has influenced my thinking about Japanese colonization and about gender. My grandmother grew up learning how to speak Japanese. During the time in which Japan occupied Taiwan (1895 to 1945), my grandmother had hardly any realistic option other than to work for the Japanese teaching Taiwanese people to speak Japanese. During this period, Taiwanese people were not allowed to speak Taiwanese; if discovered, depending on the situation, they would either be fined or killed. For my grandmother, it was a tough decision living 'in-between': being Taiwanese and under Japanese rule. Some Taiwanese hated my grandmother and thought that she did not respect her own identity and nationality.

After World War II (1945), the Japanese government left Taiwan. However, my grandmother was still strongly influenced by Japan. For example, my grandmother

⁵ Wikipedia *Taipei City in 19c*, 2004. [Online] Available from: http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Taipei_City_in_19c.jpg [Accessed 11 February 2017].

still buys fashion magazines shipped from Tokyo, watches Japanese TV shows and eats Japanese food (ice cream/ sweets); she even lives in a Japanese and Western style house. In turn, this way of living and cultural attitude influenced my own lifestyle and as I 'stood out' from my friends and peers.

When I started receiving education in school I came to realize that my country, Taiwan, was not an independent country and that it belonged to China according to the views of China and the West.^{6,7} The Chinese see Taiwan as being part of 'Great China'. For example, at the International Olympic Games, we cannot be called Taiwan; otherwise, we will not be allowed to participate. We are forced to call ourselves 'Chinese Taipei'. Another example is in our passports where Taiwan is called the Republic of China (R.O.C). Naming represents the political power balance between Taiwan and China.

Other cultures have exploited Taiwan over the centuries, always for the benefit of others rather than the country itself. Taiwan has been occupied in turn by The Netherlands (1624-1662), Spain (1626-1642), China (1683- 1895) and Japan (1895-1945). This is why Taiwan is influenced by multiple cultures and there are many layers of history. Nowadays, Taiwan is trying to survive political pressure from China, Korea, the USA and Japan.

My BA degree is in Chinese Literature. I spent four years studying different dynastic writings and literature as well as contemporary Chinese literature. I originally thought Taiwan had a strong connection with China so I thought I needed to understand Chinese literature to help me to understand the present situation in Taiwan. During my study, I became very aware of Chinese writing being used as a powerful language to divide people. In my final year, I became

⁶ Hejun, Pan 'Taiwan is not, nor has it ever been, an independent country'. *The Guardian*. 7 September 2007 [Online] Available from: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/sep/07/comment.china> [Accessed 20 September 2016].

⁷ BBC News Asia *Taiwan profile-full overview*, 2016. [Online] Available from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16177285> [Accessed 20 September 2016].

interested in the 'Chinese Portrait Brick of the Han Dynasty'⁸ (Figure 1.2) because of the relationships between painting, literature and ancient objects. I went to China to see these real objects. I enjoyed handling each piece more than I enjoyed Chinese literature so I decided to take the official test to study History of Art (see Appendix 1 for my CV).

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 1.2: Xiangyang Institute of Cultural Relics and Archeology find 27 ancient brick-chambered tombs in Xiangcheng District of Xiangyang, central China's Hubei province.⁹

I had my first Masters training in Chinese History of Art specializing in ceramic history. During that time, I went on research field trips to China with my professors. It provided me with great opportunities to see ceramics which had been buried in tombs and historic ceramics sites in the desert. Those field trips helped me learn to observe all the details of the object I was seeing. I also became very aware of the concept of the 'truth' and how to write about the history of that object. I learnt how the 'truth' is changing and shifting, depending on different viewpoints.

⁸ People's Daily Online *Precious bricks found in ancient tombs in Xiangyang*, 2015. [Online] Available from: <http://en.people.cn/n/2015/1118/c98649-8978488.html> [Accessed 10 February 2017].

⁹ *Ibid.*

When I studied in Taiwan I learnt to reconstruct Chinese history through ceramic objects. For example, my Masters degree dissertation was a study of chicken spout pots in the Sixth Dynasties.¹⁰ My history of Chinese art training provided me with the ability to evaluate aspects of Chinese ceramic history and to learn from the past to improve present understanding.

During this time, I started to work with an antique auction house and I was trained to handle ancient ceramics. My job involved researching evidence to support whether an object was real or fake, to identify the object's signature, and to write descriptions about it for the catalogue and for commercial purposes.

My job was very interesting because it combined theory and practice with ceramics. I started to think about what I really wanted to do in my life. Through handling ceramic objects, I became interested in the process and material behind the object. I wanted to 'touch' the process. I started to take a basic ceramics course at the National Normal University in Taiwan. I decided to leave my homeland and go to Britain to study and pursue knowledge. I was interested in knowing how Western society reinterprets Taiwanese history. Are Western perspectives of Asia matched to the real Taiwan? Did researchers go to Taiwan to collect first-hand data to write about Taiwan? Or did they use second-hand data to write about their perspectives of Taiwan?

1.2 Experience in the West

I studied my second MA degree in Contemporary Craft (Ceramics) at the University for Creative Arts in the UK in 2009. When I began my studies in the UK, I experienced prejudice on many levels. For example, local students called me

¹⁰ Chen, Wen-Hsi. *The study of chicken spout pots in the Sixth Dynasties*. 六朝雞首壺研究 Masters dissertation, National Taiwan Normal University 國立臺灣師範大學, 2008. [Online] Available from : <http://etds.lib.ntnu.edu.tw/cgi-bin/g32/gswweb.cgi?o=dstdcdr&s=GN0695600203.id> [Accessed 14 August 2016].

'yellow' because they did not know how to pronounce my Taiwanese name (Wen-Hsi) so I changed my name to Vicky. This name is easy for local people to pronounce and I also thought it would help me fit into Western society more easily. My name changed as my identity was shifting. Unfortunately, those situations did not change my life; I had never realized that my skin was different to that of local people. My skin does not look yellow to me, but my skin is also not white. Skin-colour is one of most obvious factors that people will use to judge other people by their appearance. After that, some people called me 'Fucking Chinese' and 'Japanese' or they thought I came from Thailand. Also, I remember one time, I fell down in the street in London and local people laughed at me. In addition, I have also been bullied in the streets in Bristol.

When I speak English, my Taiwanese accent is still sometimes a disadvantage. I have very often been asked the question 'Are you Chinese?'. This question is very uncomfortable for me as it represents how people look at my appearance to decide my national identity. Why do some people always use national identity to label other people? When I say 'No, I am Taiwanese.' some local people say 'Does Taiwan not belong to China?'. I wonder why they cannot ask 'Where do you come from?' instead of asking 'Are you Chinese?'. It feels as though the classical stereotype about East Asian people is that they are Chinese.

Currently, I have been living in the UK for almost eight years. When I exhibited my work in the West, I talked to local people; it made me question whether my art could give me the sense of connection and belonging that I desire. My experience suggested that my work was not fully engaged with.

My own situation is that of a woman from Taiwan married to a British man.¹¹ The process of getting married was not easy. Before getting married, I needed to show my birth certificate and an official document from Taiwan to prove I was a single person. I also needed to prove that 'I love my husband' and that it is not 'love' in order to get a British passport and receive benefits from the British government. I

¹¹ My husband is Martin Harman a self-employed ceramic sculptor.

needed to provide documents such as letters, emails and photos of my husband and myself together. These personal objects became the 'evidence' of love.

All these processes raised my awareness about 'marriage' in official British government processes. Personally, I found it very difficult to prove how I love my husband. It seems to me that the only way to truly prove you love someone is by dying for them.

In the end, we got married in Cardiff Registry Office in 2012. We did not have any wedding ceremonies because we had exhausted our emotional and financial resources. During these processes, I was wondering about my own value as a foreigner getting married to a British person. It was such a painful process. It also made me think about what marriage means in my own culture.

After 'successfully' getting married to my husband, some people started asking questions about me. For example, one Asian lady asked me 'Where did you meet your husband?' (in Taiwan, some people think that there are Asian ladies who hang around in pubs to look for a foreign husband). Other people asked 'Do you have a British passport?'. When I went out with my husband, people asked him why he got married to an Asian woman. These questions brought tensions between us. If two British people get married does that mean they love each other? Is it not normal to get married to someone with a different nationality in Britain? Most people believe that after I got married to a British man I would directly receive a British passport and become a British citizen. Unfortunately, the British government needed to see my husband's bank account to see if he reached the financial threshold to allow a partner to stay in the UK. This 'money' issue set me wondering about the fact that British people with lower incomes and who do not receive any benefits are not allowed to keep their international partners in the UK.

Because of my husband's income, he is not allowed to apply for a partner visa to enable me to stay in Britain. This reminded me of traditional Taiwanese society in which the mother-in-law and father-in-law will want to see their future son-in-law

has three items: house, car, gold. This financial security is the only way to prove 'love' in traditional Taiwanese society. The British government seems to look at international marriage in this way. However unfair, it is about the control of immigration.

After marrying, I changed my name to take my husband's surname. However, my new surname no longer matched the name on my Taiwanese passport. I cannot have a British passport so I needed to use my marriage certificate to prove my identity. However, some authorities did not believe my marriage certificate was valid so we had to go to court to prove that my British marriage certificate is not fake.

I continue to face ongoing questions from Taiwanese and British people. My identity has become bound up with proving myself a 'good person' in Britain. These accounts of myself as a 'good person' need to be seen very visibly to prove my love and to justify my reason for marrying a British man. These experiences have provided me with a great opportunity to look at my own culture, so this is why my early studio practice focused on exploring gender in Taiwanese wedding culture through ceramics (see Chapter 5).

1.3 Taiwanese ceramic history

As a Taiwanese woman I always think about my homeland, especially in relation to my personal interest in ceramics. The Taiwanese scholar Hsieh, Tung-Shan explains the development of Taiwanese ceramics; in his book *A History of Modern Taiwanese Ceramics* he organizes his chapters chronologically from 1895-2000 and states that:

...this book is to record and explicate the origin and development of modern ceramics in Taiwan. Accordingly, everything described, explained and discussed in this book is restricted to contents related to modern ceramics.

Therefore, folk ceramics, utility ceramics and craft ceramics are not discussed in this book.¹²

This book provided me with the opportunity to look at the history of Taiwanese ceramics in a very clear way. Hsieh also discusses 'the various principles in the development of ceramics as a cultural production [and] the institutions and members of ceramics as a social practice of ceramics'.¹³ His book provided me with data to investigate Taiwanese female ceramicists (See Appendix 2) and understand Taiwanese ceramic history.

Regarding the reality of Taiwanese ceramics and its tradition, according to Muyard's view:

Taiwanese ceramic tradition is actually just as long as the history of Taiwan itself, not its geological or geographical history, not its prehistory, but the history of the place called Taiwan and its society. Saying that is not as obvious as it seems, as it also means that Taiwanese ceramic tradition is not simply part of the long Chinese ceramic tradition but has [been] analyzed in relation with its singular short history and as a distinct phenomenon.¹⁴

Muyard suggests that Taiwanese ceramics have been influenced by other traditions although the Chinese tradition has had a strong impact.

...there are actually four kinds of cultural traditions that feed Taiwanese culture and society: the aboriginal cultural tradition, the predominant Han Chinese traditional culture, and the Western and Japanese 'modern'

¹² Hsieh, Tung-Shan *A History of Modern Taiwanese Ceramics*. Taipei: Taipei County Yingge Ceramics Museum and Artist Magazine/Artist Publishing Co., 2005, p. 13.

¹³ *Ibid* p. 13.

¹⁴ Muyard, Frank. 'Taiwan ceramics as a mirror of Taiwan history and its national culture shift: The Yingge Ceramic Museum and the institutionalization of a new Taiwanese artistic tradition'. In Muyard, Frank, Chou, Liang-Kai and Dreyer, Serge eds. *Objects, Heritage and Cultural Identity*. Nantou: Taiwan Historica, 2009, pp. 389-419.

traditions that have been influencing the Han Chinese and Aboriginal societies and cultures since the seventeenth century.¹⁵

From Muiyad's statement, it is implied that Taiwanese ceramics have been presenting multiple layers of historical influence. I feel that Taiwanese people still struggle to present their identity and still need to practise how to present their cultural identity in Taiwan and outside Taiwan. For me, as an artist, it is not easy to show my real identity in Britain. My identity is negotiating, changing, shifting in relation to different situations, as not many people are aware that Taiwan is different to China. Throughout history, Taiwanese ceramic forms have reflected the impact of colonization by many nations or been influenced by other nations. Much of this influence still continues today. For example: the ceramic industry still has a strong influence from mainland China; however, my field trip research suggests that Taiwanese ceramicists would like to develop their own culture.

1.4 Research questions and aim

I have suffered a number of difficult experiences; knowing how to 'keep calm and carry on' is a big challenge. I cannot speak about these issues to people so I use my ceramic practice to express my experience of living in-between.

As a Taiwanese woman working and living in Britain, I have the impression that I have been labeled as an outsider. It seems I do not fully belong to this society and, after marriage to a British man, I also do not belong to Taiwanese society. Some Taiwanese think I became British as I have a British husband.

This is not a very comfortable position to be in, but it allows me to observe the cultural difference between Taiwan and Britain. I can see both sides. This unique position prompted me to explore my experience through ceramic practice, as research. However, sometimes I feel that I am culturally-homeless: an outsider, an 'other' and a tourist. Through my ceramic practice 'touching clay' records my

¹⁵ *Ibid* pp. 393-394.

frustration and anger at the tension of living in-between two cultures. I am seeking a solution to how to express feelings of not belonging anywhere. I wish racial prejudice would disappear, but it is impossible.

My research aims are to explore the impact that living in a state of 'in-betweenness' can have on perceptions of self, to develop a visual language to communicate this experience and to explore my own expression of cultural identity in relation to theory in the field. My principle research questions therefore are:

- How is my Taiwanese cultural identity expressed through making? and
- How might ceramic practice be used to develop a visual language to communicate a personal experience of 'in-betweenness'?

In this thesis, my intention is to engage my ceramic works in the examination of attitudes concerning the experience of 'living in-between', instead of simply focusing on the individual objects. Selected works from my PhD development over four years of study are presented. My written component follows my studio practice in different stages of the development of the research. I have explored other relevant artists and contexts to support my investigation. From this process, I have developed my creative ideas and represent my creativity.

During my four years of study I kept a journal to record and reflect on my creative processes. There are 206 entries in the journal so I have selected ten examples which show my progression and have included them as Appendix 3.

In Chapter 2, my critical context is discussed in terms of cultural studies, cultural identity, and material cultures. Most studies relating to cross-cultural identity have been written by Western scholars which results in a dominant Western perspective when analyzing Asian culture. I will also consider the concepts of 'self' and 'in-betweenness' and visual language.

Chapter 3 'Methodology' has an introduction and is then divided into two sections. The first explains my ceramic context: the field trip to Taiwan. It looks at how I used oral history to collect first-hand data and at ethical considerations. The second section covers creative practice as research: how my ceramic artwork represents each research stage and responds to the research questions.

Chapter 4 explores the experience of female Taiwanese ceramicists. It includes my fieldwork observations of how they manage the challenge of being creative in the space between traditional and modern Taiwanese approaches to ceramics. It also discusses what I learned from my field trip and how these experiences have helped me to create my ceramic artworks. On my return from Taiwan, I organised two exhibitions ('Taiwanese female ceramicists' in Bristol and 'A disappearing culture: the Amis earthenware tradition in Taiwan' in Bath) as a way of giving voice to the experiences of the female Taiwanese ceramicists: a visual language.

Chapter 5 looks at how I used clay to create works that explore the different aims of my research. These practical outputs are shown in the PhD exhibition. Through my research and practical course development I hope to address the following questions:

- How have my field trip experiences influenced my creative practice?
- How have my perceptions of self been affected by my experience of being an 'outsider', living in-between two cultures?
- Can I use Taiwanese bananas as a symbol to convey aspects of my cultural identity?

In Chapter 6 I summarize and evaluate my PhD development during four years of study, how I used my creative practice as research to address my research questions, the challenges, my contribution, and possible further research.

Chapter 2: Critical context

The central theme of my thesis explores the concept of 'in-betweenness' in relation to my ceramics practice. Therefore, the critical context will draw upon ideas about cultural studies, the construction of identity, naming and cultural labels, negotiating identity and material culture and objects.

2.1 Cultural studies

According to Bowman:

Cultural studies is an umbrella term covering a multitude of possibilities: studies of popular culture, national culture, regional culture, cross-cultural or intercultural encounters; studies of subculture and marginal or 'subaltern' culture; studies focusing on questions and issues of class, gender, ethnicity, and identity... studies elaborating on the cultural implications of government policy, law, legislation, educational paradigms... as well as studies concentrating on the myriad details of everyday life, approached in terms of anything from power to pleasure to politics. ¹

From all this range of possibilities my research focusses on how these ideas relate to different power relations. It can be argued that the European ideological perspective is generally taken as the world's standard to judge other countries.

¹ Bowman, Paul 'Editor's introduction'. In: Bowman, Paul ed. *The Rey Chow Reader*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

Layers of power are constructed by different ideological systems. My research challenges the 'Postcolonial critic'² perspectives to explore the Eastern cultural perspective. This is a politically thought-provoking space³ between the East and West. Key scholars who focus on South East Asian cultural studies are Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Rey Chow. However, many of the scholars focus on India and Hong Kong, particularly in relation to the British colonial period. Taiwan was never occupied by the British so it was very hard to find supporting research which particularly focused on Taiwan. The situation is complicated by the fact that Taiwan is perceived, including by the British government, to be part of China, not an independent country. I wish South East Asian culture could develop its own perspective about its value.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is a leading commentator on colonialism and post-colonialism, who introduced the idea of the subaltern 'speaking' in contrast to the dominant discourse – in other words, telling a different story from what most people find in history books allowing the voice of the dominated or powerless to come through. Landry and MacLean explain that:

According to Spivak, then, the subaltern as subject-effect shows up the contrivance of more positivist models of the subject. The subaltern emerges from the Subalternists' research not as a positive identity complete with a sovereign self-consciousness but as the product of a network of differential,

² Goswami, Namita 'Europe as an other: Postcolonialism and philosophers of the future'. *Hypatia*, 29 (1), 2014, pp. 59-74, p.59.

³ Lyons, Laura E. and Cynthia Franklin. 'On the cusp of the personal and the impersonal: An interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak'. *Biography*, 27 (1), 2004, pp. 203-221, p. 207.

potentially contradictory strands. However successful traditional history-writing might be at hiding this sleight-of-hand substitution of an effect for a cause, the effort is still doomed to cognitive failure, since it is merely a convenient disciplinary fiction.⁴

Spivak was born in India and lives in the USA, so her situation is similar to mine: I am living in a Western culture but it is not part of my original cultural background. I also have personal experience of post-colonialism in relation to the history of Taiwan (see Chapter 5 Taiwanese bananas section).

Spivak's discourse relates to 'intellectual engagement in urgent political consideration about colonialism, post-colonialism and the contemporary international division of labour between the First World and Third World'⁵ In a sense, Taiwan is living in a world where there is an exchange between the First World and the Third World in terms of export trade and culture.

Although Spivak does not focus specifically on Taiwanese society, the fact that she looks at other non-Western women provides a perspective in which Western society is not the centre of the world. Spivak's consideration of other societies in her discourse influenced me to explore my own situation. Her thinking is beyond Western society, and this thinking has inspired me. It is necessary to explore the blend of home culture with the host culture(s), thus becoming truly multicultural and achieving what has been described as a 'third culture'.

⁴ Landry, Donna and Gerald MacLean eds. *The Spivak Reader*. New York and London: Routledge, 1996, p. 204.

⁵ Morton, Stephen *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 2.

Hollinshead suggests that 'many places and people exist ambivalently in displaced or under-recognised' third spaces - located within in-between forms of supposed difference.⁶

Useem states that:

That segment of the world-encompassing third culture called the binational Third culture is defined as the complex of patterns learned and shared by communities of men stemming from both a Western and non-Western society who regularly interact as they relate their societies, or sections thereof, in the physical setting of a non-Western society.⁷

The third culture is shared with others who have had similar experiences,⁸ building the relationship between original culture and host culture to create new culture. Diversity in the socio-cultural experience, impacts differently on cultural identity.

Therefore, Useem suggests that 'a third culture is not carried by a self-contained group which lives in a cultural enclave between societies, for the crucial roles of members who carry the binational third culture are the roles of cultural middlemen mediating between societies.'⁹

⁶ Hollinshead, Keith 'Tourism, hybridity, and ambiguity: the relevance of Bhabha's "Third space" cultures'. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 30(1), 1998, pp. 121-156, p 4.

⁷ Useem, John *et al.* 'Men in the middle of the Third Culture: The roles of American and non-Western people in cross-cultural administration'. *Human Organization*, 22 (3), 1963, pp. 169-179, p. 170.

⁸ *Ibid* pp. 169-179.

⁹ *Ibid* p. 170.

In addition, the 'third culture' does not mean to separate two cultures directly; it means juxtaposed cultures in which to build a bridge to 'marry' the different cultures – to learn other cultures together. Useem asks if 'the foreigners learn the local language, should the nationals learn the foreigners' language, should both learn both?'¹⁰

Rey Chow is originally from Hong Kong and now she is living in the USA. When she presented her paper at a conference on gender issues in twentieth-century China¹¹, one commentator, an American female anthropologist who has done pioneering work on rural Chinese women, told the audience that what Chow said about the relation between China studies and Western cultural imperialism made her feel politically uncomfortable. Instead, she suggested, we should focus on the internal colonization of Chinese women by the Chinese patriarchy. This person was thus still illustrating, in 1991, the point Balandier made in 1951, namely that 'out of a more or less conscious fear of having to take into consideration...the society of the colonial power to which they themselves belong. Western anthropologists persistently neglect the "colonial situation"'¹² that lies at the origin of their field of research in most parts of the world.¹³

¹⁰ *Ibid* p. 171.

¹¹ Bowman, Paul, p. 35

¹² Balandier, G 'The colonial situation: A theoretical approach (1951)', translated from the French by Robert A. Wagoner. *In* Wallerstein, Immanuel *ed. Social Change: The Colonial Situation*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1966, pp. 34-61.

¹³ Bowman, Paul, p. 35

Therefore, Chow provides an explanation of the 'problem' of the Chinese:

Chinese problems are examples of how what many profess to be cross-cultural study can remain trapped within a type of discourse that is geographically deterministic and hence culturally essentialist. China, Japan, and East Asia become signs of difference that reaffirm a sense of identity as originary self-identicalness.¹⁴

The Oxford Dictionary definition of 'Self' is 'a person's essential being that distinguishes them from others.'¹⁵ According to Giddens, the 'Self' is not fixed but is a reflexive process of constructing identity. It is not a set of characteristics we are born with, but our self-identity is formed by our experience of life, our values and how we look at our world.

Giddens states that 'self- identity is a modern problem, perhaps having its origins in Western individualism'¹⁶ and that:

The self is not a passive entity, in forging their self-identities, no matter how local their specific contexts of action, individuals contribute to and directly promote social influences that are global in their consequences and implications.¹⁷

¹⁴ *Ibid* p. 35

¹⁵ Self, English Oxford Living Dictionaries. [Online]Available from: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/self> [Accessed 30 March 2018].

¹⁶ Giddens, Anthony. *Modernity and Self-Identity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, p. 74.

¹⁷ *Ibid* p. 2.

In the field of cultural studies there is very little literature specifically about Taiwan. It is always linked with China and Hong Kong. I wanted to avoid 'area studies' and to be able to focus my research on Taiwan. Post-colonialism is not just a theory; it is my life experience; therefore, I wish to explore the possibility of viewing my personal context from a combined Eastern and Western perspective.

I also wondered how my voice as a Taiwanese student living in the UK can be truly represented through the medium of English or English translations. Language is the medium through which cultural meanings are communicated. Language is not a neutral medium,¹⁸ but rather the means by which values, meanings and powers are transferred or communicated. Language, therefore might not be the best way to understand another culture and its values, so I have chosen to explore cultural themes through my practical artwork. In this way, art can escape Western standards and judgment as my visual language. Dancevic explains that 'art is used as a means of non-verbal communication in art therapy it has to be followed by the individual's verbal interpretation of the object produced. It is this that actually makes their unconscious processes conscious.'¹⁹

It might be that the East can escape the construction and visualization of power relationships between colonizer and colonized. ^{20,21}This situation can relate to 'the

¹⁸ Barker, Chris *Cultural Studies*. 3rd ed. London: SAGE, 2008, p. 75.

¹⁹ Dancevic, Mirjana Tomasevic 'Communicating feelings through visual language: my visual art diary: how I am feeling today'. *International Journal of Education Through Art*, 1(1), 2005, pp. 85-92, p.86.

²⁰ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty and David Damrosch 'Comparative literature/world Literature: A discussion with Gayatri Chakravirty Spivak and

multi-cultural question'²² as non-Western countries often unpack their cultural basis from citizenship and national identity,²³ not from their cultural identity. Therefore, the question of how to move beyond a Western interpretation of society and incorporate Eastern perspectives has encouraged me to investigate the construction of identity. In Song's PhD thesis *Mechanisms of in-betweenness: through visual experience of glass* she explains that:

in-betweenness is a compound term, in-between + ness. At the most literal level, 'in-between' designates spatial and temporal realms. It implies the continuity of things that cannot be separated or cut off cleanly. The idea of boundary describes the notion of in-betweenness through physical dimensions. To expand its application, in-betweenness denotes a thing, state or condition situated between polar binaries.²⁴

Bhabha explains the term 'in-between' as 'In-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood - singular or communal - that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.'²⁵ He describes this in-between space as a

David Damrosch'. *Comparative Literature Studies*, 48(4), 2011, p. 457.

²¹ Spivak, Gayatri C *Death of a Discipline*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003, p. xii.

²² Hall, Stuart 'Conclusion: The multi-cultural question'. In Hesse, Barnor ed. *Unsettled Multiculturalisms*. London: Zed Books, 2000, pp. 209–241.

²³ Gabriel, Sharmani Patricia "'After the break": Re – conceptualizing ethnicity, national identity and "Malaysian – Chinese" identities'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 37 (7), 2014, pp. 1211-1224, p. 1212.

²⁴ Song, Min Jeong. *Mechanisms of in-betweenness: through visual experiences of glass*. Ph.D. thesis, Royal College of Art, 2014, p. 21.

²⁵ Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. New York and London: Routledge, 1994, pp. 1-2.

specific space: Third Space:

Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity of fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew. ²⁶

Kumar explains that 'Space becomes a powerful tool in the artist's repertoire to study conflict and employ that conflict within the medium of art.'²⁷ For me, in-betweenness is: a space with freedom to express emotional, personal and political voices; not in the middle; on the edges; ambiguous; an uncomfortable condition; invisible tension; on-going negotiation. In Song's research, she did not mention personal identity as a Korean living in the UK; she used patterns and glass material to investigate her visual experience about in-betweenness. I chose a different way to approach my research.

2.2 The construction of identity

My research explores the concept of multiple cultural identities. Individuals who are straddling multiple cultures, giving a sense of 'living-in-between cultures'.²⁸

Living in-between cultures can create a culture shock and cross-cultural

²⁶ *Ibid* p. 37.

²⁷ Kumar, Kshama 'Negotiations with art, identity and space: Reflections on between Kismet and Karma'. *South Asian Popular Culture*, 9(1), pp. 95-101, p. 96.

²⁸ Bhatia, Sunil and Anjali Ram 'Culture, hybridity, and the dialogical self: Cases from the South Asian diaspora'. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 11 (3), 2004, pp. 224-240.

adaptation situations.²⁹ This experience of living in-between cultures raises key issues in relation to cultural identity. It is important to explore the feelings that arise in people who find themselves in this situation. We need to think about how to define people living-in-between; they may be defined as ‘immigrants’, ‘foreigners’, ‘strangers’ or ‘refugees’.

The concept of identity is understood by this experience. Identity is based on cultural values, including personal identity, belonging, representation, and stereotyping. This ongoing construction of identity creates a platform through which we express ourselves and relate to other people. He, Yinan explains that ‘identity is a voice inside you saying this is the real me’.^{30,31} Also Tilly states that ‘identities reside in relations with others you-me and us-them,’ and ‘identity centers on boundaries separating us from them’.³² This relationship is formed through self- representations and other people’s responses. The process of constructing identity is a way to arrange and negotiate individuals and others.³³ Furthermore, Identity is reinforced through social behavior, so the construction of identity relates to material culture, history, geographical locations and cultural identity.

²⁹ Ward, Colleen and Antony Kennedy ‘Psychological and socio-cultural adjustment during cross- cultural transitions: A comparison of secondary students overseas and at home’. *International Journal of Psychology*, 28 (2), 1993, pp. 129-147.

³⁰ Erikson, Erik cited in Laitin, David, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998, p. 20.

³¹ He, Yinan ‘Identity politics and foreign policy: Taiwan’s relations with China and Japan, 1895-2012’. *Political Science Quarterly*. 129 (3), 2014, pp. 469-500, p. 472.

³² Tilly, Charles *Identities, Boundaries, and Social Ties*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2005, p.8.

³³ Castells, Manuel *The Power of Identity*. 2nd ed. Malden MA: Blackwell, 2004, p. 7.

Arnett suggests that '...globalization may cause identity confusion and distress in non-Westerners caught in a struggle between two cultures with competing value systems.' ³⁴ Personal identity, interpersonal relationships, and societal norms for these individuals are greatly affected.³⁵ Having differing backgrounds and worldviews³⁶ can allow people to build relationships with self, others, and the world in a new way.³⁷ However, the reality is challenging those uncertain categories.

2.3 Naming and cultural labels

Regarding cross-cultural situations, naming and changing name become interesting processes. For example: I am Wen-Hsi; but I use the name Vicky in Britain. Names have cultural value attached to them. In Taiwan a child is given a name which represents their parents' wishes for their future and their family. For example, my name is Wen-Hsi. Wen means good at art and literature. Hsi means sunshine because I was born when the sun was rising. However, Lamp explains that 'feelings evoked by and/or characteristics attributed to each name may vary, and no two words remain completely synonymous'.³⁸

³⁴ Arnett, J J 'The psychology of globalization'. *American Psychologist*, 57, 2002, pp. 774-783.

³⁵ Onwumechili, Chuka *et al.* 'In the deep valley with mountains to climb: Exploring identity and multiple reacculturation'. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27 (1), 2003, pp. 41-62.

³⁶ Adams, J M and Carfagna, A *Coming of Age in a Globalized World: The Next Generation*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2006.

³⁷ Karlberg, M 'Discourse, identity, and global citizenship'. *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, 20, 2008, pp. 310-320.

³⁸ Lamp, Philip E 'Research report ethnic labels: naming or name calling?'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 5 (4), 1982, pp. 542-548, p. 542.

In Britain the name of Vicky is a diminutive of Victoria which is believed to be a feminine form of the Roman name Victorius, meaning 'conqueror'. Until Queen Victoria ascended the throne in 1837 at the age of 18, the name was rare in the UK. By the time of her death 64 years later in 1901, it had become a popular name in the English-speaking world. The Queen was actually christened Alexandrina and Victoria was her second name.³⁹ But I chose to be known as Vicky because in the East the letter 'V' is associated with being happy as in Figure 2.1. So, names can be social and cultural labels representing family background, social status, etc. Interestingly, recently in the East, the media have begun to warn people not to put 'scissor hands' in front of the camera because their fingerprints might be stolen (Figure 2.1).

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 2.1: Can fingerprints be stolen from scissor hands photos?⁴⁰

³⁹ Gillie, Rebecca Victoria *The meaning, origin and facts about the name*. Huffpost Parents United Kingdom, 2015. [Online] Available from: http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/09/09/victoria-the-meaning-origin-and-facts-about-the-name_n_7322804.html [Accessed 11 February 2017].

⁴⁰ Global Daily *Can fingerprints be stolen from scissor hands photos?*. 2017. [Online] Available from: <http://global.sina.cn/qushi/article/20170111/009662536f451000.html> [Accessed 11 February 2017].

Giving someone a name or deciding to call someone by a name is a kind of power. Barker describes naming as 'cultural politics... the power to represent common sense; the power to create official versions'⁴¹ Naming is not neutral language, it is a form of imposing thinking onto someone from an interpretive perspective.⁴² Therefore, naming is a way to identify an individual and to communicate with other people. Lamp explains that 'naming is a group convention. It entails the establishment of certain verbal symbols, or words, to refer to specific things or to categories of things.'⁴³ Therefore, people use name calling as a form of communication to express emotional feelings or attitudes toward other people. Furthermore, naming is the way to place labels on identity or to categorize unfamiliar or familiar issues.

Andrea Louie who (wrote about the American context) argues that in the USA there is a category of people of Chinese descent who no longer live on Chinese soil but who are still considered to be racially Chinese.'⁴⁴ As China is so big in land mass perhaps it could be said that in order to unite so many people it must impose its own culture and ideas to bring about a oneness. Chun explains that 'in the case of Taiwan, archaeology became an important tool in China's search for its cultural roots and in its political legitimacy as a nation'.⁴⁵ However, I prefer to discuss my unease at Taiwanese cultural identity being subsumed into Chinese cultural

⁴¹ Barker, Chris, p. 441.

⁴² Sunderland, Jane *Discourses, Discourse Identification and Discourse Naming, Gendered Discourses*. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 47.

⁴³ Lamp, Philip E, p. 542.

⁴⁴ Louie, Andrea *Chineseness across Borders: Renegotiating Chinese Identities in China and the United States*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004, p. 51.

⁴⁵ Chun, Allen 'Fuck Chineseness: On the ambiguities of ethnicity as culture as identity'. *Boundary 2* 23 (2), 1996, pp. 111-138, p. 118.

identity. There is a tension between the indigenous, the ethnic and the national Chinese. Gabriel states that 'absolutist national identities are dangerous in that they privilege cultural origins and notions of authenticity over the evolving complexities of what it means to be 'Chinese' in particular times and places.'⁴⁶

Taiwanese people would like to keep these categories separate. The reason for this is that Taiwanese people struggle with our country's name. For example, with regards to the international Olympic Games, we cannot be called Taiwan, otherwise we will not be allowed to participate. Instead, we need the name 'Chinese Taipei' imposed by China. Another example concerns our passports: we have Republic of China (ROC) passports, which identifies the political power between Taiwan and China. I wonder who has the power to become the 'namer'⁴⁷ of other cultures and how the naming becomes the features, which imply the concept of the stereotype.

Stereotyping, is a short-cut in the brain which quickly and easily helps people to understand other people. It could be a good way to save time and to understand each other. However, some people take advantage of this and use stereotyping to place themselves in a privileged position. Pickering states that 'categories should not be regarded as the elemental structure of thought'.⁴⁸ Therefore, I wonder how people can process their thoughts when they are not familiar with other cultures and just rely on stereotypes. Also, I wonder how precisely does stereotyping

⁴⁶ Gabriel, Sharmani Patricia, p. 1216.

⁴⁷ Sunderland, Jane, p. 47.

⁴⁸ Pickering, Michael *Stereotyping and Politics of Representation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001, p. 3.

describe one culture to another culture? It is a very challenging process which involves different language, cultural attitudes, cultural positions.

Pickering states that 'stereotyping is also discriminatory because the stunted features or attributes of others which characterize them are considered to form the basis for negative or hostile judgments...' ⁴⁹. For example: stereotyping of women, of Asian people, of foreigners and so on. Furthermore, Pickering explains that 'stereotyping involves a loss, the loss of an individualized understanding of other people, whether these are foreigners or those in other social classes and communities outside our own situated experience' ⁵⁰. Therefore, I wonder how to make people aware of different perspectives on stereotyping as part of challenging their original thoughts to look at cross-cultural situations. Some people never experience another cultural position; I wonder how these people discuss the representation of limited experiences to categorize other cultures.

Naming and stereotyping are all relative to the cultural labeling processes, these processes involve representation of 'speaking for' and 'speaking of'. ⁵¹ I wonder who is allowed to speak for others. The speaking process is the symbolic form of understanding. Therefore, I wonder how what we learn from others will affect how we think about ourselves and how we look at different cultural contexts.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 10.

⁵⁰ Lippmann, W 1915 *cited in* Pickering, Michael, 2001, p. 10.

⁵¹ Pickering, Michael, p. xiii.

2.4 Negotiating identity

Druckman states that 'identity is part of a large political context in which international negotiation takes place.'⁵² Individually people living in the contexts of cross-cultural situations take on multiple identities, therefore people will experience conflict, such as culture shock, questioning identity and the feeling of not belonging. Visibly, most people will seek to communicate their own identity with other people to feel a sense of belonging. For example, people originally living in Asia who decide to move to Western societies, start to change their food habits, they start 'wearing Western clothes, listening to Western music and (most important of all) thinking Western thoughts'.⁵³ Those processes influence their identity and their negotiation between two cultures. How do they strike a balance between their original culture and the values within Western culture? This evolving process could possibly effect a cultural change within those local cultural values.

Cross-cultural negotiation can be associated with the structure of society. For example, Ting-Toomey suggests that 'broadly speaking, [the] U.S. overall and Australia and many of the northern European cultures have been identified as more highly individualistic, in comparison to many of the Asian culture... in terms of global level, almost seventy percent or so of these cultures subscribe to some

⁵² Druckman, Daniel 'Negotiation and identity: implications for negotiation theory'. *International Negotiation*, 6 (2), 2001, pp.281-291, p. 281.

⁵³ Snyder, David Pearce *Five meta-trends that are changing our world*, 2015. [Online] Available from: <http://www.the-futurist.com/five-meta-trends-that-are-changing-our-world.htm> [Accessed 12 September 2016].

forms of collectivistic values'⁵⁴. Therefore, how do people from Asia living in Western cultures negotiate their new cultural situation? How do they maintain a healthy balance of living in-between two cultures when living with more individualistic cultures?

Everyone has a different way of dealing with this but usually it causes a lot of personal conflict and will often require the person to seek opportunities to resolve this identity issue.⁵⁵ When the societal structures are different, people need to deal with the emotional expression and experience to reconcile conflicting identity negotiation.⁵⁶ Ting-Toomey proposes that dealing with feelings of emotional vulnerability or experiencing emotional discomfort when facing dissimilar others is what facilitates growth as people.⁵⁷ People in this context 'listen with greater thoughtfulness and see things through fresh lenses'.⁵⁸ Ting-Toomey suggests that the struggle between identity security (feeling supported and respected) and identity vulnerability (feeling threatened) in new contexts allows individuals to embrace new frameworks of self-identity.⁵⁹ She argues that those emotional experiences bring out an engagement with the world and provide new perspectives to review personal and cultural identities.

⁵⁴ Ting-Toomey, Stella *On face-negotiation theory. A first look at communication theory*, 2014. [Online] Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQJcMac_dnw [Accessed 12 September 2016].

⁵⁵ Pruitt, Dean G 'Negotiation theory and the development of identity'. *International Negotiation*, 6 (2), 2001, pp.269-279, p. 272.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 271.

⁵⁷ Young, Jennifer T *et al.* 'Identity in flux: Negotiating identity while studying abroad'. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 38 (2), 2015, pp. 175-188.

⁵⁸ Ting-Toomey, Stella *Communicating Across Cultures*. New York: Guildford Press, 1999, p. 8.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*.

Furthermore, Barker explains 'emotion as experience... emotions are modes of sensuous embodied conduct made meaningful in the cultural world that may be pre-reflexive but nevertheless purposive and intentional or world directed.'⁶⁰ Emotional experience will impact upon identity. Moon explains that 'personal emotion is important in - or central to - critical thinking, but it is a neglected issue. Hastie and Davies comment that emotions play a significant role in decision-making and choice.'⁶¹ However, the issue must be addressed relating to how we can begin to understand people's identity, through emotional and personal experience to explore useful and valuable development in cross-cultural negotiation situations. Is this part of reevaluating the structure of negotiated identities?

Negotiating identity is a transformative process, involved with balancing boundaries and conflicting situations. How can an individual find the space to construct their identity between their original culture and host culture to be able to survive?⁶² How can people who experience living in-between cultures negotiate their identity? Perhaps it is never ending negotiation because they can never fully fit into the new society.

⁶⁰ Barker, Chris, p. 135.

⁶¹ Moon, Jennifer *Critical Thinking: An Exploration of Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge, 2008, pp. 68-76.

⁶² Pruitt, Dean G, p. 272.

2.5 Material culture and objects

Objects are expressions of a person and life experience. 'Who am I? We attend to certain bits of information or signs that represent the I, and these signs become an object of interpretation.'⁶³ Padilla explains that:

...the I is made alien to itself, existing as it does deeply embedded in a discursive world outside of its own making or control. We discover an I that reveals its incarceration within a network of discursive practices invented by cultural imperialists whose goal has been and still is to lock it into a cell of alien linguistic culture and ideology, into a consciousness that participates in its own submission, transformation, and erasure.'⁶⁴

Objects are used by people to express notions of identity. As defined by Schlereth 'Material culture is that segment of humankind's biosocial environment that has been purposely shaped by people according to culturally dictated plans'⁶⁵ From this concept, 'all human –mediated sights, sounds, smells, tastes, objects, forms, and expressions are material culture. When there is purposeful human intervention, based on cultural activity, there is material culture.'⁶⁶

⁶³ Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Eugene Rochberg-Halton *The Meaning of Thing: Domestic Symbols and the Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p.3.

⁶⁴ Padilla, Genaro 'Imprisoned narrative? Or lies, secrets, and silence in New Mexico women's autobiography'. In: Calderón, Héctor and José David Saldívar eds. *Criticism in the Borderlands: Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture, and Ideology*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998, p. 43.

⁶⁵ Schlereth, T J ed. *Material Culture: A Research Guide*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1985, p. 5

⁶⁶ Bolin, P E and D Blandy 'Beyond visual culture: Seven statements of support for material culture studies in art education'. *Studies in Art Education*, 44 (3), 2003, pp.

From a material culture perspective, I am exchanging and interacting with things (objects) in order to explore the identities of individual persons and societies. 'Culture and material culture are the two sides of the same coin';⁶⁷ therefore, these perspectives offer me a platform to provide new layers of meaning within my work. Additionally, my studio practice is creating my own visual language and a way of communicating through visual representation.

The memory of the object is another layer of material culture. Phillips and Steiner said that 'distinctions between categories of art, artifact, and commodity are projections of individual experience that reveal, in the end, far more about those who collect objects than those who produce them.'⁶⁸ Whether some objects consist of 'souvenirs' from Western viewpoints or are part of Taiwanese culture depends on who is looking at them. It is an interesting question because I grew up with these objects which have layers of meaning, but how do others look at these objects? The objects in my studio practice have deep social meanings and identity. Additionally, there is a question of whether traditional ritual is suitable for current times.

At the start of my research, my creative practice was tied with very particular social and cultural rituals because I wanted to find an 'object' to represent Taiwan

246-263, p. 250.

⁶⁷ Tilley, Christopher 'Objectification' in *Handbook of Material Culture*, London: SAGE, 2006, p. 61.

⁶⁸ Phillips, Ruth B. and Christopher B. Steiner eds. *Unpacking Culture – Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999, p. 19.

and to talk about being Taiwanese. I wondered about the idea of 'souvenirs' and how other people associate with Taiwanese culture.

However, I have realized that I am not just Taiwanese. I also feel half-British so my identity is mixed up. I changed the focus of my research to look at being a Taiwanese person living in Britain, with a 'double identity' half-East half-West. Therefore, I no longer felt that finding one object to represent a single idea was appropriate. In the end, I produced four series of ceramic outputs to address the situation of living in-between with an overlapping identity. In Chapter 3 I will discuss the Methodology. It will be divided into two sections, the first explains my ceramic context: the field trip to Taiwan. The second section covers creative practice as research: how my ceramic artwork represents each research stage and responds to the research questions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will consider the methodologies employed during my PhD studies.

The first section relates to the methodologies used in my supporting research and covers my field trip and oral history. The second section relates to methodologies utilized in my creative practice as research.

3.1 Introduction

My principle research questions are: How is my Taiwanese cultural identity expressed through making and how might ceramic practice be used to develop a visual language to communicate a personal experience of 'in-betweenness'? My supporting research is to record the creative process of Taiwanese female ceramicists and also to explore their experience and values. There is little information about Taiwanese female ceramicists in the West. I would like to fill this gap and have investigated aspects of Taiwanese female ceramicists using information from my first-hand experience. As primary research, I have collected data, ideas and opinions by interviewing women in Taiwan. I prepared questions to ask the female Taiwanese ceramicists (see Appendix 2), to encourage them to give their own personal accounts. The questions were not only about their work but also related to their roles in Taiwanese society.

I used this interview process as a means of gathering oral history. I did this by using an HD camera to record and recall their memories. The documentary film

was recorded on a research trip I undertook in 2013.¹ My aim was to utilize this resource to investigate, construct and represent this part of Taiwanese culture and society. After conducting the interviews, I considered how to use this first-hand information to exhibit² (see Chapter 4) in public spaces as well as contribute to the Aberystwyth ceramics archive³.

During the field trip, I investigated two communities: one in a rural area, the other in an urban area. I interviewed five women in the Amis community in the rural area. I observed their traditional pottery process and was invited to participate in this process. I interviewed seventeen women in the urban community.

My research method involved using oral history methodology to construct interviews that would give a voice for Taiwanese female ceramicists and, where possible, reveal some Taiwanese ceramic history. In addition, as a woman ceramicist, I was particularly interested in other women's motivations and the status of women ceramicists in Taiwan. It has always been women who made ceramics in that area and their knowledge of the skill was also passed down from previous female generations.

¹ Chen, Wen-Hsi *Field trip documentary film*. It is a ten-minute film that you can view here: Vimeo [Online] Available from: <https://vimeo.com/79514968> [Accessed 18 September 2016].

² This is part of my PhD research: Pottery from aboriginal Taiwanese-Amis women, *A Disappearing Culture: The Amis Earthenware Tradition in Taiwan*, 17 January – 31 May 2015, The Museum of East Asian Art, 12 Bennett Street, Bath, BA1 2QJ, UK.

³ Aberystwyth University *Ceramics collection and archive*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.ceramics-aberystwyth.com/> [Accessed 9 September 2016].

It was extremely challenging to transcribe the voices of the women I interviewed, as I had to consider multiple layers of language. These include Chinese, Taiwanese and aboriginal Taiwanese (see Appendix 4). I was able to address these issues of cultural differences only when I had made sense of these linguistic layers, then developed an interpretation in a Western language. In choosing my approach to transcribing, it was important to express the sense of urgency that was conveyed to me in the original language.

Another aspect to consider is ethics and how this affects the research. Why did the interviewees, need to accept what I was doing? For example, when I went to the aboriginal village to conduct interviews with a group of women in 2013, they initially thought that I would 'sell' them to the British as they did not fully understand the meaning of research. There was a strong sense of distrust and uncertainty during my time with the tribe. I felt, at times, that they considered me to be a Westerner that had appropriated their culture and history without conveying respect. I felt it was crucial to manifest this sense of tension that I felt whilst researching, because the aboriginals know as little about Western society as it knows about them.

3.2 Fieldwork

I undertook my field trip to Taiwan from 15 April to 17 May 2013. It was an intense and self-funded project. Before I arrived in Taiwan, I contacted local councils and museums to gain permission and to access potential female

ceramicists' contact details. I decided to interview women who had their own ceramic studio and already had more than six years' experience. I traveled with my husband as my assistant to help me carry the HD recorder. We traveled from north Taiwan to the middle, and then to south Taiwan and back to the north: Taipei, Yingge, Taoyuan, Miaoli, Hsunchu, Hualien, Taichung and Kaohsiung. I interviewed twenty-two female ceramicists; five were indigenous women living in a rural area, and the remaining seventeen women were living in urban areas.

After finishing my field trip to Taiwan, I returned to Britain. It was very challenging to code all the data and information. I wrote a report and listened to all the tape recordings, using traditional Chinese to write transcripts. In order to help Western people to understand the Taiwanese female ceramicists interviews I hired people without a ceramics background, for example my young brother and my mother's students, to help me translate most of the texts. I reviewed and amended their translations. It was a very challenging process to determine the meaning of the appropriate language and keep a balance between the essence of the original interviewees' voices and the process of 'making sense'. Although from a different field (communication studies) I liked Dervin's concept of creating a bridge to explain the relationship between situation, gap and use (help) through experience.⁴ In some way, my writing is a communication tool to bridge the culture gap between the situation in Taiwan and Britain. My PhD studies use a range of research methods, including fieldwork in Taiwan (oral history, interviews) and creative ceramic practice, to show the visible gap between the two cultures

⁴ Savolainen, Reijo 'Information use as gap-bridging: The viewpoint of sense-making methodology'. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science & Technology*, 57(8), 2006, pp. 1116-1125.

and communicate the experience of living in-between.

I categorized my field trip data relating to my creative practice, particularly the emerging themes: issues relating to gender, ceramicists working as husband and wife couples, Taiwanese culture and issues, functionality. Also, the making process: mental and physical preparation, material sources and firing process (see Chapter 4). The next challenge was to integrate these themes into my studio practice and use them to respond to my research questions.

3.2.1 Oral history

Oral history is a process by which to gather first-hand information; it relates to memory and experience. Thompson explains that 'oral history is as old as history itself. It was the first kind of history.'⁵ Howarth explains that 'in June 1878, just one year after patenting his invention of the photograph, Thomas Alva Edison realized the great potential for recording of the human voice.'⁶ It seems this was the first method used to capture oral history. Oral history provides an ability to reconstruct history from a different perspective. Thomson and Perks explain that 'in some fields, oral history can result not merely in a shift in focus, but also in the opening up of important new areas of inquiry.'⁷ In oral tradition, story-telling moves from generation to generation to reveal the layers of history. It is important to consider how to successfully portray this history utilizing first-hand information,

⁵ Thompson, Paul *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 5.

⁶ Howarth, Ken *Oral History: A Handbook*. Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998, p. 5.

⁷ Thomson, Alistair and Robert Perks eds. *The Oral History Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 25.

and avoiding a distortion of the truth.

Taiwanese society is almost entirely dominated by men; women's contributions are limited and often stifled. The unofficial, personal and emotional history of such women can be evidenced and compared with local and officially documented history. Different perspectives on Taiwanese culture can be given through listening to women's memories and stories.

I have been increasingly interested in the differences between men and women in terms of oral history. It seems that women are much less conservative, conveying sensitivity and emotion when they take part in an interview. This has led to 'recognition that women's oral history is so special, and significantly, that it has developed as field unto itself - primarily though the work of women outside the major oral history centers.'⁸ It is difficult to find evidence of the influence of women in Taiwanese history before recent periods. I do not intend to hypothesize the reasons for this, however, but rather to address this gap and give a voice to Taiwanese female ceramicists and allow them a platform from which to explore their identity.

Sandino explains that 'life stories sit between autobiography and biography, assisted narratives that are the product, or the coproduction of interviewer and interviewee'⁹ Oral history is created from encounters with people, objects, history

⁸ Dunaway, David K. and Willa K Baum eds. *Oral History- An Interdisciplinary Anthology*. 2nd ed. Lanham MD: AltaMira Press, 1996, p. 217.

⁹ Sandino, Linda 'Introduction: Oral history in and about art, craft, and design'. In: Sandino, Linda and Matthew Partington eds. *Oral History in the Visual Arts*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 3.

that show personal identity.

As well as talking to the female ceramicists, I interviewed my grandmother (1928-) and grandfather (1926-2016). They lived under the colonial power of the Japanese. This had a strong influence on my childhood, and my attitudes toward history, nationality, political power and colonialism. This affected my research by creating a desire to have a historical context and oral history context. Therefore, I interviewed my family members and Taiwanese female ceramicists and these supporting research contexts influenced and framed my own studio practice as a female ceramicist.

My supporting research has a significant objective as I will contribute it to the Aberystwyth ceramics archive, but I also have exhibited an oral history project in a public space¹⁰ in order to communicate to audiences what I have understood about Taiwanese culture.

I applied oral history as my main research tool to explore the perspective of female Taiwanese ceramic makers. Actually, I interviewed twenty-five makers in urban and rural areas in Taiwan. However, after I finished interviewing, three makers decided not to allow me to publish their interviews.

By exhibiting oral history in a public space, I hoped to augment the audience's

¹⁰ This is part of my PhD research: Pottery from aboriginal Taiwanese-Amis women, *A Disappearing Culture: The Amis Earthenware Tradition in Taiwan*, 17 January – 31 May 2015, The Museum of East Asian Art, 12 Bennett Street, Bath, BA1 2QJ, UK.

understanding of Taiwanese culture and the identity of these female ceramic makers that are central to the culture's survival. In the future, I would like to hold an exhibition in the form of an installation to create a space to tell a story about my homeland. By doing this, I anticipate the audience will receive a heightened and altered awareness and better understanding of Taiwanese female ceramicists through my research.

After I received their contact details, I mainly used international cellphone, Skype and emails to make sure my interviewees knew the purpose of my research. Before the field trip, I emailed a set of very specific questions relating to ceramics. However, some of the interviewees decided to not prepare anything before I went to their space. It was a very sensitive decision for them, because some interviewees said they did not want to think too much before I visited them.

Furthermore, some potential interviewees were suspicious about my intentions. As a PhD student without a recognizable name in the international ceramics field, it was not easy to persuade others to trust the value of my project. Therefore, it was very challenging to build a trust-relationship and organize my field trip.

All the interviews and studio visits were face-to-face. At the start of the interview, I asked participants to sign two forms: one interview permission form and one giving me permission to take photos and videos for research purposes (Appendix 5). After they agreed then I started to interview them. However, one female ceramicist decided to sign the forms at the end of her interview; unfortunately, after finishing the interview, she decided not to sign her name, so I cannot share

her experience in my PhD writings.

The interviews took place in the participant's home or studio space; they appeared relaxed in their familiar environment. Most interviews were informal, because participants offered Taiwanese tea and prepared meals to allow our conversations to have a fun and 'ice-breaking' atmosphere. I also prepared some British tea and chocolate for them. Also, some participants offered me accommodation because some interviews took me more than one day. It was very challenging to manage interview time because some people were very talkative. I felt very sorry to stop their talking, for me it seems time can develop trust. I was a stranger; however, I was able to build and maintain a trust-relationship.

Jane Finch carried out PhD research interviews to study clergymen's wives and explains:

In particular, my experience of interviewing has raised a combination of methodological, personal, political and moral issues ... in my experience, a woman researcher can elicit material from other women. That in turn raises ethical and political questions which I have found some difficulty in resolving. One reason for this difficulty is, I shall argue, that discussions of the 'ethics' of research are commonly conducted within a framework which is drawn from the public domain of men, and which I find at best unhelpful in relation to research with women.¹¹

¹¹ Finch, Jane 'It's great to have someone to talk to': the ethics and politics of interviewing women'. In Bell, C and H Roberts eds. *Social Researching: Politics, Problems, Practice*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984, p. 71.

Also, Finch explains that

Women are almost always enthusiastic about talking to a woman researcher, even if they have some initial anxieties about the purpose of the research or their own 'performance' in the interview situation.¹²

I also have had a similar experience to Finch during the interview process. I was aware that if some Taiwanese female ceramicists' husbands were around our interview space then our conversations became very 'on the surface' and I could feel a little bit of tension around the space. When I interviewed the participants some of the husbands did ask me why my research did not include men, why I did not interview them. I answered that I wanted Taiwanese female ceramicists to have the opportunity to share their practice, also that there was not much research about them. One participant's husband said that my research would not 'fully cover Taiwanese ceramics, will be not strong enough'. I already knew my research would not convince them so I still continued to use my limited time to interview Taiwanese female ceramicists.

Finch states that:

In my own research experience, I have often been aware of such an identification, as women interviewees have begun to talk about key areas of their lives in ways which denote a high level of trust in me, and indicate that they expect me to understand what they mean simply because I am another

¹² *Ibid*, p. 72.

woman.¹³

I am female, like the Taiwanese ceramicists, I have similar experience to my interview participants. My role was as a 'participant observer, a creative shaper, a reflective practitioner'¹⁴. Sometimes I was involved their making processes; I became part of their society, for example in the Amis community. In some cases, I felt we learnt something together and developed our understanding of ceramics and each other. In a couple of instances, I felt I belonged to Taiwan, I found my 'home' was there. Also, I discussed my PhD project with my interviewees and respected their feedback and opinions. This gave an opportunity for interviewees to continue my interview and experience my cross-cultural situation. Bryman describes being a participant-as-observer as 'the same as the complete participant [role], but members of the social setting are aware of the researcher's status as a researcher. The ethnographer is engaged in regular interaction with people and participates in their daily lives.'¹⁵

3.3 Practice

Practice-led PhD research is a creative journey. This journey has relied on personal interest and experience. As Rosi Braidotti has observed: '...the theoretical process is not abstract, universalized, objective and detached, but rather...it is situated in

¹³ Finch, Jane, p. 76.

¹⁴ Gray, Carole and Julian Malins *Visualizing Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, p. 21; p. 70.

¹⁵ Bryman, Alan. *Social Research Methods*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 2001. P299.

the contingency of one's experience.'¹⁶ I wonder how the experience of living in-between can raise other people's awareness to have a better understanding about identity: a woman, Taiwanese, a ceramic artist. In my creative journey I therefore took a systematic approach with the aim of exploring how to use ceramic practice to develop a visual language to communicate my feelings and ideas to my viewers.

Gray and Malins state that 'in the role of practitioner-researcher, subjectivity, involvement, reflexivity is acknowledged; the interaction of the researcher with the research material is recognized. Knowledge is negotiated- inter-subjective, context bound, and is a result of personal construction.'¹⁷ Therefore, I explore how I can collect explicit personal experience as evidence to support my research and convince other people that personal experience is a vital process in my research methods.

Barrett identifies the importance of 'the process and methodologies of artistic research as the production of knowledge and assessing the potential impact of such research within the discipline and the broader cultural arena.'¹⁸ Therefore, I wonder how I can frame those personal experiences in a useful way to draw on my writings as well as the creative research. Barrett raises the question: 'How can artistic researchers establish identifiable criteria for evaluating both approaches and methodologies it uses and for assessing the significance value of its outcomes

¹⁶ Braidotti, Rosi *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 237.

¹⁷ Gray, Carole and Julian Malins, p. 21.

¹⁸ Barrett, Estelle and Barbara Bolt eds. *Practice as Research Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2009, p. 1.

as research?’¹⁹ I used my creative practice as research to achieve these aims and build a bridge between research and practice through my methods, for example: PhD writings as a creative form, studio tests, artist-residencies and conferences.

My studies are a journey of discussion – in cross-cultural situations of Taiwanese cultural identities. Those identities will include my experience of being Taiwanese and other Taiwanese female ceramic makers’ experiences. They will also include how my Taiwanese cultural identity has changed and shifted in a new culture (in Britain). Therefore, I have asked myself how can I reconfigure my artwork as a research process? It is challenging to find a metaphor to represent being in-between two cultures because it is difficult to describe the abstract background of one culture (the smells, noises, attitudes, values, etc.) to people from another culture. This is especially the case when people have no experience of the other culture.

My original academic background was in Chinese literature (degree from Soochow University, Taipei). I have always had an interest in writing poetry - I see it as a way of capturing ‘the moment’ and of putting symbols and metaphors into a written form. Writing poems was part of my making process. I used it as a way of recording my feelings about the making process. It helped me to analyse myself and my actions and to describe a process that can be difficult to articulate. Most people only ever see the physical outcome of my ceramic work but writing poems helps give an insight into the process itself. My creative practice is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 8.

My practice work aims to absorb this double cultural identity so that a third culture can emerge. The process suggests mixing up the host culture and original culture to create a new culture.

3.3.1 Practice-based research

The research methods provide ‘an investigation of practice as a personal creative construction’²⁰ The challenge in artistic research is to make methodologies ‘explicit and transparent (documentation is essential) and transferable on principle (if not specifics)’.²¹ Newbury suggests that artistic research should maintain the four key elements of a definition of research - ‘systematic, rigorous, critical and reflexive, communicable’²². Other scholars agree and feel that being systematic and rigorous is as relevant in artistic research as it is in other kinds of research, but that artistic research also requires imagination.²³ I feel that my research meets these requirements However, I found it was a big challenge. I tried to be systematic about my practice process, as actual process (please see my test diary in Appendix 3), and rigorous in my supporting research (field trip): data collection and data analysis (please see an example of an interview transcript in Appendix 4).

²⁰ Gray, Carole and Julian Malins, p. 20.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 21.

²² Newbury, Darren, ‘Research perspectives in art and design’. *In*: Stanley, N and M Woolley eds. *RTi (The research training initiative)*. Birmingham: University of Central England, 1996, pp.1-72, p. 9.

²³ Sullivan, Graeme *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in Visual Arts*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2010, p. 192.

Schön points that 'the systematic knowledge base of a profession is thought to have four essential properties. It is specialized, firmly bounded, scientific and standardized. This last point is particularly important, because it bears on the paradigmatic relationship which holds, according to Technical Rationality, between a profession's knowledge base and its practice.'²⁴

Gray and Malins state that 'Artistic methodology is a pluralist approach using a multi-method technique, tailored to the individual project.'²⁵ Therefore, I used an interwoven method of theoretical investigation and visual practice in the studio; supporting research methods included critical context, field trip and interviews. My practice research was through different stages and locations of my ceramic practice, artist-residencies and exhibitions.

Gray and Malins point out that

the research about (into) practice has tended to be carried out by other academic researchers (historians, educationalists, sociologists, psychologists, and so on) from an external perspective. These approaches reflect more the classic scientific method, where the researchable is object field, and the researcher remains detached.²⁶

The method of creative practice was further developed for the PhD as a way of exploring cultural identity in different locations through artist-residencies that

²⁴ Schön, A Donald *The Reflective Practitioner*. London: Ashgate, 1991. pp. 23-24.

²⁵ Gray, Carole and Julian Malins, p. 21.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 22.

provide 'a new, fashionable phenomenon that owes its explosive growth to the globalization of artists' nomadic behaviourThe idea is growing that artist-in-residence may offer new spaces and models for the development of knowledge and understanding, not only in the arts, but in society as well.'²⁷ I wanted to develop my creative practice as research outside of the art school, working from artist studios and museum settings to encourage me to produce work collaboratively in local cultures. This was then shifted into my own studio practice. The position of artist in-residence provided me with an opportunity as an outsider to work outside of the art school and outside Britain. As an artist, I need to live within society. I believe artists should be socially responsible to help people to understand the world we live in. I positioned myself to take on the role of a professional artist, I need to be flexible and balanced to be able to navigate through different creative environments. Taking inspiration from other cultural references enriched my personal experience in exploring cultural identity.

3.3.2 Exhibiting

I used different locations to develop my creative practice. My three main locations were Bath Spa School of Art and Design and two artist-residencies (in Denmark and Taiwan). Also, I exhibited my main ceramic works (Sculptural Spoons, 8 Hours, Fingerprints, Bananas and Traditional Chinese Characters) and presented two conference papers in different cultural environments and engaged with the

²⁷ Dutch Culture. Trans Artists *Artist-in-residence history*, undated. [Online] Available from: <http://www.transartists.org/residency-history> [Accessed 9 October 2016].

audience. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the outputs and engagement opportunities from the artist residencies and conferences. My exhibitions are discussed in Chapter 4.

Table 3.1: Artist-residencies and conferences

N	Event	Output	Engagement + communication
1	1 month artist-residency at Guldagergaard-ICRC (International Ceramic Research Center), Denmark. 2015	8 pieces to respond to Danish pastry culture	Presentation for local Danish female ceramic makers The ceramic festival in Skælskør, Denmark
2	1 month artist-residency at New Taipei City Yingge Ceramic Museum. Taiwan 2016	Solo exhibition: The language of ceramics at New Taipei City Yingge Ceramic Museum Taiwan	Presentation, Demonstration, workshops for public audience Interactive to the viewers, in return for taking a piece of my porcelain writing home with them. In 11 days, this raised £40 (2000 Taiwanese Dollars) for helping Tainan earthquake victims.
3	8 th Annual Conference of Taiwanese Young Scholars in Europe in Paris 2015	Paper presentation about Exploring Taiwanese Cultural Identity through Contemporary Ceramic Practice Showing the Amis documentary film to Taiwanese young scholars in Europe.	Engaging with Taiwanese young scholars in Europe from a range of disciplines as part of debate about Taiwanese cultural issues (see Appendix 10 for Panel Chair's reflections)

4	The Early Stage Researcher Conference: Ethics 2016	Paper presentation about Ceramic Bananas-Looking at Taiwanese Cultural Identity, to the Early Stage Researchers from the UK.	Exchange of personal and cultural belief reflection on the cultural context of bananas also discussion about my ceramic techniques.

3.3.3 Critical reflection

Being a female ceramic artist living and working between two cultures (Taiwan and Britain) offers me a great opportunity to reflect on myself as an outsider in both cultures. I create artwork which reviews and responds to this tension, confusion and ambiguity. For example, as my work developed, I wondered if my bananas could be evaluated and judged within a Western framework. In the last 100 years, Taiwan has struggled to cope with at least three different national identities: Japanese, Chinese and Taiwanese. The issue of the existence and definition of Taiwanese cultural identity is very much a question. I intend my ceramic practice to be a symbol of Taiwanese cultural identity, exploring and embodying ideas relating to cultural influences and my personal journey, especially my feelings of cultural homelessness.

Those methods impelled me to develop my PhD studies. The combination of supporting research and practice research emerged. The critical context (Chapter 2), field trip and interviews (Chapter 4) as contextual and theoretical research paralleled the studio practice; those core experiences were essential to an integrated theory and practice.

I used my tests as part of my creative methods employed to investigate my creative practice as research in different stages as my visual language (Chapter 5). I contributed significantly to conferences for the Taiwanese and British research communities. Furthermore, I undertook two artist-residencies becoming involved in public-engagement and the exchange of cultural identities in relation to contemporary discourse that presented my research to a wider audience. In Chapter 4 I will explore ceramic context through the experience of Taiwanese female ceramicists.

Chapter 4: Research in Taiwan

After returning from Taiwan, I wrote a record about my field trip. I felt a simple record could not be enough to make my research as visible as I wanted; therefore, I wondered about proposing a project to a local gallery or museum to make my research more visible and share it with a wider audience. In the end, I had two exhibitions to address the two areas of my field trip, one represented urban Taiwanese female ceramicists at PAPERArts in Bristol from 11 August to 17 August 2015. Another represented indigenous Taiwanese women at the Museum of East Asian Art in Bath from 17 January to 31 May 2015.

4.1 Urban Taiwanese female ceramicists: Exhibition at PAPERArts, Bristol



Figure 4.1: Exhibition poster. ¹

¹ Fang, Lucida *Exhibition poster*, 2015. [Online] Available from: <http://www.wenhsichenceramics.com/taiwanese-female-ceramicists.html> [Accessed 11 February 2017].

The exhibition catalogue contained this statement: ‘This exhibition brings together seven Taiwanese female ceramicists who work with clay. “Taiwan is our homeland, which is a lovely place to work with clay”’.

Below this statement was the following text:

This exhibition was organized by Wen-Hsi Harman. She is a practice-led research PhD student in ceramics at Bath Spa University in the UK. She deals with the predicament of identity. Her supporting research investigates Taiwanese female ceramists with a particular focus on notions of gender: Taiwan continues to be a patriarchal society. Traditionally, women in Taiwan have always relied on male-dominated social rituals as this defines their identity in life. This exhibition explores how Taiwanese female ceramists survive and balance their life with clay. Additionally, the show investigates how they use clay to express their identity.

Thank you to all of the seven Taiwanese female ceramists: Chou Miao Wen, Lin Miao-Fang, Jenny Chen, Lan-Mei Tang, Sophia Deng, Yu Chi Chiu and Wen-Hsi Harman. Especially, thank you to the sponsors Martin Harman, Lucida and Wen-Hsi’s family in Taiwan for contributing towards this exhibition. Additionally, thank you Professor Moira Vincentelli and Dr. Jo Dahn for helping edit and advise me.

I was responsible for compiling the exhibition catalogue, hiring a Taiwanese illustrator, Lucida Fang, and dealing with the international tax and shipping. Also, I was a curator for displaying the ceramic work (see Figure 4.2).



Figure 4.2: Exhibition space.²

Miao-Fang Lin 林妙芳 (1969-) created a functional traditional tea set to support her financial security, because she struggles to survive by selling sculptural ceramics. During my field trip, I interviewed her in her studio in Yingge. I got the impression that she very much respects the concept of the traditional ceramic 'Master'. She lived with the famous Taiwanese ceramic master Sun Chao and his family for six years to learn ceramic skills (1987-1993)³, from throwing, glazing, firing, because during this time in Taiwan, ceramic skills were not often passed to a woman. She also went to the university of Texas at Dallas to study for a Master of Arts in ceramics and Master of Fine Arts in ceramics (2002-2004).

In this exhibition, she showed her rich green and orange crystalline glaze, I displayed her work on the top of traditional handmade Chinese paper; I wanted to create an Asian setting to respond to her work (see Figure 4.3).

² Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

³ Lin, Miao-Fang. *New Taipei Yingge ceramic museum*, Undated. [Online] Available from: <http://modern.ceramics.ntpc.gov.tw/zh-tw/Person/Content.aspx?Para=15> [Accessed 6 February 2017].

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.3: Miao-Fang Lin. Tea ware with green and orange crystalline glaze, porcelain.⁴

Yu-Chi Chiu (1978-) worked in the ceramic industry for more than ten years in Yingge. She is one of the few female ceramicists who can make large-sized wheel-thrown works in Taiwan. During the interviews, she mentioned she learnt everything from her workplace. No one taught her throwing; she watched the 'ceramic Master' everyday in the factory. After she finished her job, she stayed at the factory to practise how to do throwing every night for three years. For her, to 'watch the ceramic master throw was a vital learning process', and then she investigated her own body: how to balance with the throwing machine, following her breathing, particularly her hand movements as she inhaled and exhaled. Also, in her central making concept is preserving the tradition of Taiwanese ceramic culture, practically in wheel throwing and respecting the traditional 'ceramic Master'. She believes ceramic craftsmanship is in a clear and simple spirit, so she shares her throwing skills with the public; for her, wheel throwing is not 'secret' skills. She also published a book and DVD *Wheel Throwing Techniques*⁵ in 2011 as

⁴ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi. Size: 10x 11 x 25cm.

⁵ Chiu, Yu-Chi *Wheel Throwing Techniques*, New Taipei City Yingge Ceramics Museum, 2011. [Online] Available from: <http://www.books.com.tw/products/0010534711>

part of the New Taipei City Yingge Ceramics Museum's ceramic education series of books.

In this exhibition, her wood-fired tea-leaf container was made from thrown stoneware, and the traditional Taiwanese lion on the top was handmade. She likes to share her handmade creations through her hands and her simple life. She was feeding a couple of 'street dogs' as her pets, so the traditional Taiwanese lion was based on her dogs. During the interviews, she mentioned that she prefers to live a simple life so she decided to build her own wooden firing kiln and doesn't work for a commercial pottery any more. For her, to set up her own studio and teach someone wheel-throwing skills, this is her way to convey the values of simplicity and purity.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.4: Yu-Chi Chiu. Pottery animal stone lion jar 獅獅茶倉⁶

Lan-Mei Tang, focuses on wood firing. She explains her creative process in an email:

[Accessed 6 February 2017].

⁶ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi. Earthenware, 25x 35 x 10 cm.

In 2009, I participated in the artist-in-residence program at the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park in Japan. While I was there, I saw the beauty of natural wood ash combined with the changing atmosphere in the wood kiln chamber. The ash painted my works with beautiful, pristine colors. That experience started my endeavor into wood firing.

My creativity since then has been sparked by wood firing of pottery over the past few years. Like clay that has morphed into a piece of beautiful artwork, my life has similarly been transformed. I have come to understand how to enthusiastically and wholeheartedly enjoy the process and, through it, gain happiness.

Two solo exhibitions were held in Taiwan to showcase my wood-fired artworks. The first solo exhibition, *The Tales of Flames*, [was] held at the Taichung City Dadun Cultural Center in 2013 while the second one, *Joy of Pottery*, was held at Zhubei Cultural Center in 2016.

A collection of chickens, presenting a variety of characters in diverse forms, shades, emotions, and personalities, were presented to share my artistic expression of these chickens as the major theme in both exhibitions. All of these artworks were made from mixed clay with no glaze other than natural ash coming from the wood firing. Other wood-fired pieces such as vases, fishes and lanterns, just name a few, were also exhibited.⁷

In this exhibition, she showed her chicken family; in traditional Taiwanese society, chickens symbolize the 'building up' of a family and play a significant role in the wedding ceremony. During her interviews, she mentioned that her daughter Karen belongs to the Chinese Zodiac year of the rooster. Now her daughter is living in USA and she made a chicken as a gift for her daughter, also she misses her daughter a lot.

⁷ Tang, Lan-Mei *Email to Wen-Hsi Chen*. 26 February 2015.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.5: Lan-Mei Tang's chicken family.⁸

Jenny Chen, was born in Yingge, which is a famous ceramic town in Taiwan. During her interviews, she mentioned her mother who used clay to make all kinds of flowers for the ceramic factory; so, her first experience of clay was making clay flowers with her mother for increasing the family income. Since she married her husband who is a ceramist, Hsin-Chan Chen, she became a ceramicist too.

During the interview, she explained she started to make a variety of roses because of her childhood experience with her mother. She probably created hundreds of clay roses to support her family income so, for her, roses have a variety of gestures, just like herself, as a daughter, a wife and a mother.

For her clay roses have a unique experience, through the processes of wedging, forming, firing and turning to a product, such as turning, from a girl to a woman, a daughter to a wife and mother. During this growing-up process there is pain, joy, happiness and sadness; those emotions make her life more wonderful.

⁸ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi. Stoneware. Size: 70x 65 x 80 cm.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.6: Jenny Chen, Taiwanese Miracle Rose ⁹

This work by Miao-Wen Zhou (Figure 4.7) was made by hand pinching. Her work often uses the form of a female head. Her female head form was influenced by the traditional Taiwanese and Chinese dramas. The patterns from natural plants and flowers reference the clothes and modern motifs of historical Chinese dramas. She mentioned that her patterns could have a deeper meaning in previous history; however, she has realized those patterns have lost meanings in the present day. This is why she would like use her work to interpret and recreate those meanings. Also, her central making idea is to imagine the beauty of the oriental women in artistic pottery form. Some of her work also relates to some functional purpose, for example, this work is a tea container. She also finds it very challenging to make a living as a sculptural ceramic artist. Therefore, she needs to make more work with a functional purpose to survive because she has decided to not teach any students about ceramics. She realized teaching occupied too much time, so she decided to become a full-time 'ceramic artist' to sell her work to make a living.

⁹ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi. Earthenware. Size: 30 x 30 x 20cm.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.7: Miao- Wen Zhou. Beauty.¹⁰

Sophia Den, in her little free time, makes sculptures with a cat face and human body (see Figure 4.8) During her interview, I asked her what is your purpose in making 'pottery'. She answered: 'there was a time when I married into a family of ceramicists. It forced me to fight [the many stresses in my life] ... I made pottery for survival'.

¹⁰ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi. Earthenware Stoneware. Throwing. Painting. Reduction fired to 1230 degrees, Size: 15x 18x25cm.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.8: Sophia Den, Nine Lives Cat Woman¹¹.

However, when Den worked in the pottery as part of the family business her own hand-modelled forms were very important to her. She is living in-between traditional pottery and her own art world. Den said: ‘...we [are talking] about the inspiration of my pottery creation. Some of the creations were unconscious life form, cats and meditator... because my health condition was not good.’ She also mentioned that ‘Working on the pottery clay was the only time when I could be free and be myself. This was the highest state of my spirit. My heart is very pure at that time...I took this meditative process (not a religious one) to influence my breath and clean my thoughts before creating a piece and was conscious of my inhaling and exhaling with my finger movements’ (see Figure 4.9).

¹¹ Photograph provided from Sophia Den. Nine Lives Cat woman. Clay (for high temperature). Wood-fired, natural glaze. Size: 30x10 x15cm.2014.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.9: Sophia Den. All I want is smooth breathing.¹²

I showed a couple of ceramic works in this exhibition. The first, was Feeding, (see Figure 4.10). I collected a metal spoon-shape from the Art and Design School's rubbish bin at Bath Spa University. I decided to paint it a pink colour. Also, I used my fingerprints to create the form of the rose petals. I also created a 'ceramic hand' by pinching and pushing clay. The metal spoon form was a symbol of the West as cold and strong. My ceramic works were representing the East as soft and weak and laying down. I decided on the title 'Feeding', because I have realized the West

¹² Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi. Porcelain, Wood-fired, natural glaze. Size: 29x9x15cm..

is trying to feed the East, no matter whether in terms of values or language. For me, the centre of the world is the West. Most Western society decided on a standard to judge what is 'normal' or 'correct' for the East; for example, what kind of eating life-style means 'high' or 'low' status. Most of the time I feel very uncomfortable being 'fed' in the UK. Since I have been living in the UK, I have been eating the local food and feeding on local ideas; those processes are called 'adapting or fitting in with British society'. For me, I have realized that no matter how Western people are 'feeding' me, I never will be full, I always feel a little empty.



Figure 4.10: Wen-Hsi Chen. Feeding.¹³

For my next piece (Figure 4.11) I chose the title of 'My Homeland: Taiwan', it is a title with a literal meaning. For me, this means a lot. For some audiences it means

¹³ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi. Porcelain, ready-made metal spoon, size: 90x 30x 25 cm.

nothing. During the exhibition preview, I have realized that in Bristol, not many people know Taiwan. Even if they knew it, they always associated it with China because there are a lot of Chinese students studying in the University of Bristol and a strong 'Chinese' community in Bristol. However, I do not fully agree with myself as 'Chinese' so I am living in an isolated 'homeland' in Britain.



Figure 4.11: Wen-Hsi Chen. My Homeland Taiwan.¹⁴

I also showed my fired banana peel in this exhibition, I gave it the title 'Skin' (see Figure 4.11). In reality, the banana peel never will be white, just as in reality no one is 'white'. Keevak explains the label of 'yellow':

No one in China or Japan applied yellowish pigment to the skin...and no one in the Far East referred to himself as yellow until late in the nineteenth century, when Western racial paradigms, along with many other aspects of modern Western science, were being imported into Chinese and Japanese

¹⁴ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi. Porcelain. Handmade. Gold Lustre. Wall piece. Size: 35x 15x 4 cm.

contexts. But yellow does have very important significations in Chinese (but not Japanese) culture: as the central color, the imperial color, and the color of the earth; the color of the originary Yellow River and the mythical Yellow Emperor, the supposed ancestor of all Han Chinese people... in every instance in which some idea of yellow in China was analyzed or even mentioned in the pre-nineteenth-century literature, there is not a single case I am aware of in which it was connected to the color of anyone's *skin*. The idea that East Asian people were colored yellow cannot be traced back before the nineteenth century, and it does not come from any sort of eyewitness description or from Western readings of East Asian cultural symbols.¹⁵

I have been given the label 'yellow'; I will never forget this memory, I used my 'Skin' to express the emotional feelings and negotiate my own identity as an Asian woman living in Britain. It explores how I 'dress up' my skin colour as a sensitive, literal, metaphor symbolic of my own situation. I also wondered why Western society decided to use skin colour to judge the value of non-Western people. I suggest the 'skin colour' issues are still ongoing in reality. Some people still use skin colour as the first icon to judge someone's nationality, where they come from.

¹⁵ Keevak, Michael *Becoming Yellow a Short History of Racial Thinking*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp.1-2.



Figure 4.12: Wen-Hsi Chen, Skin 皮膚.¹⁶

During this one-week exhibition, I prepared a note and let viewers leave messages. I have received a couple of positive feedback comments. Therefore, I have realized my research can have a use in the real world, it is not just 'locked' in the academic world. My research was shared with an audience to encourage them to understand other cultures. However, I compared myself to other people holding an exhibition¹⁷ in Bristol. I did everything by myself, even if the exhibition was small, but I used my own way to construct my own research with public engagement. In the next section, I will explore how I proposed another exhibition about some of my research.

¹⁶ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi. Earthenware. Wall piece. Size:16x 16x 4cm.

¹⁷ Bristol Museum and Art Gallery *Ahead of the curve: new china from China*. 13 December to 1 March 2015, Undated. [Online]Available from: <https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/bristol-museum-and-art-gallery/whats-on/ahead-of-the-curve/> [Accessed 8 February 2017].

4.2 A disappearing culture – the Amis earthenware tradition in Taiwan: Exhibition and documentary film, Museum of East Asian Art, Bath

I decided to propose my project to the museum and sent an email to the curator, Nicole Chiang, at the museum of East Asian Art on 16 October 2013. The email included my proposal, my Amis film and photos of the Amis pottery.

At first, the curator was unsure whether the Amis display would fit with the museum setting because most objects in the museum are very decorative with high-firing temperature glazes. The Amis pottery, on the other hand, is low-firing, with no glazes or patterns. Also, it is made from low-value clay rather than porcelain. In the end, I returned with my supervisor, Johanna Dahn, who persuaded her that there was 'value' in the work produced by indigenous people.

In the end, the exhibition 'A disappearing culture - the Amis earthenware tradition in Taiwan' happened from 17 January to 31 May 2015 in the Museum of East Asian Art in Bath.

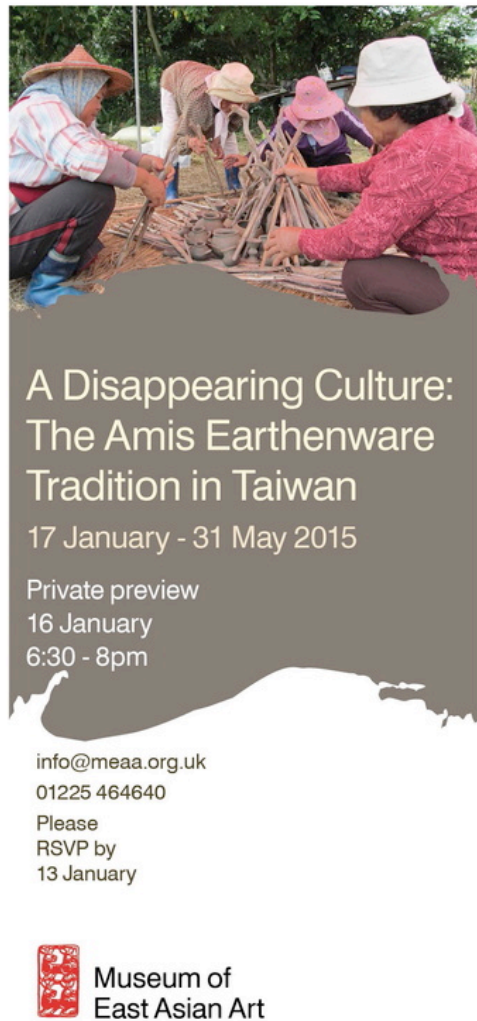


Figure 4.13: A Disappearing Culture: The Amis Earthenware Tradition in Taiwan exhibition poster.¹⁸

In the exhibition, I displayed my documentary film and objects collected through my primary-research. The Amis tribe is the only remaining group to still produce pottery in tune with their cultural history. My research activity has been focused on this tribe and I produced the documentary film showing their process. For they have a voice and this deserves to be heard in order to understand the learning process and aid their ability to continue into future generations. It is a ten-minute film that you can view here: <https://vimeo.com/79514968>.

¹⁸ Exhibition poster designed by Museum of East Asian Art. Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

The Amis tribe pottery was intrinsic to this exhibition as these objects are the originals and have come directly from the tribe. The objects were fired to a temperature of about 860 degrees. The surface colour is the result of the firing process. They used dry rice plant shells, collected the wood sticks from the seaside over previous years as well as hay. All of these elements are very important resources of the firing process. They didn't waste or use any electric power to fire the pieces.

I showed my field trip film on the second floor of the museum alongside the museum collection (Figure 4.14).



Figure 4.14: My research field trip film showing in the Museum of East of Asian Art.¹⁹

For visitors who did not watch the film, I used photographs to show them the Amis pottery process, below here:

¹⁹ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

1. Digging the clay

They dig the clay nearby their ancestors' tombs, which are located by the ocean and near the motorway. They use axes and hoes to help them dig for the clay. They mentioned to me that if they find a fragment of red brick type clay they must continue to dig as the clay will be near. The clay is located between the rock and red brick type clay. It is a thin and sticky layer.



Figure 4.15: The rock with a fragment of red brick.²⁰

²⁰ Photograph by Harman, Martin.



Figure 4.16: A fragment of red brick. ²¹



Figure 4.17: Photograph of women digging for clay.²²

2. Sieving the clay

Firstly, they put the clay on a flat surface on the ground. They use the hoe to break

²¹ Photograph by Harman, Martin.

²² Photograph by Harman, Martin.

up the clay. Secondly, they use their hands to pick out any stones from the clay. They then keep the clay in an outside space for a couple of days to let it dry out completely. They then sieve the clay.



Figure 4.18: Lisin helped deal with the clay. ²³



Figure 4.19: Drying out clay in the outside space. ²⁴

²³ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

²⁴ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

3. Pounding the clay

Firstly, they have to carry out a ceremony to pray for good luck to help them throughout the pottery process. They then prepare their handmade cushion, a material that comes from recycled plastic. The clay is put in the top of the cushion. After the ceremony, they add water to the dry clay. They then use their handmade wooden stakes to prepare the clay for making pots, they do this by pounding it until it becomes sticky and compact like dough.



Figure 4.20: Pounding clay.²⁵

²⁵ Photograph by Harman, Martin.



Figure 4.21: The pounding process is finished, they then prepare the clay for making pottery. ²⁶

4. Making pottery

In previous years, the Amis learned how to make pottery from their mother or grandmother; some grandmothers would teach them to use their knee to construct the shape. Using their knee to help shape a pot is one example of a process passed down from generations. Nowadays, they have started to use a stone and a wooden bat to help build the shape. They usually spend more than two weeks letting the pottery completely dry out before they fire it, but this research trip was very time pressured so they used a dehumidifier to speed up the drying process.

5. Firing the pottery

In previous years it was their ancestor who would bring a dream for the women, the ancestor would decide which space and which sunny day would be the best to do their firing. Nowadays, they struggle to keep this action going. Almost all the land in the area does not belong to them any more, it either belongs to local rich families or the government.

²⁶ Photograph by Harman, Martin.



Figure 4.22: Firing space. ²⁷

Before a firing, they will hold a ceremony to get rid of any evil spirits (Palafoay) and they ask their spirit to protect the firing process.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.23: Lakaw holding a ceremony. ²⁸

²⁷ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.



Figure 4.24: Women helped each other build the outdoor firing. ²⁹



Figure 4.25: Lakaw used newspaper to light a fire on the sides of the outdoor

²⁸ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

²⁹ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

firing.³⁰

They always let the firing process go on for about twenty-four hours, to a temperature of about 860 degrees.

6. Picking up the pottery from the outdoor firing

When the firing is complete they hold another ceremony to thank their spirit for bringing them good luck for a successful firing process and then they start to pick up the pottery. After picking up the pieces from the outdoor firing they will use water to wash out any dirt and wait for the piece to dry before they use it.



Figure 4.26: The finished firing process. ³¹

I also showed two objects from the Amis in this exhibition; one was the Amis model of a vegetable steamer (Figures 4.27 and 4.29) and another was the ceremonial cup (Figure 4.28).

³⁰ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

³¹ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.



Figure 4.27: The Amis model of a vegetable steamer. ³²

Amis pottery is divided into three parts.

1. Ceremonial pottery



Figure 4.28: Diwas – ceremonial cup used for alcohol. ³³

³² Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

2. Cooking pottery



Figure 4.29: Tatolonan – used for steaming vegetables.³⁴

³³ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

³⁴ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.



Figure 4.30: Koleng – used for general cooking.³⁵

3. Container pottery



Figure 4.31: Atomo – storage container.³⁶

I also showed twenty photos taken by myself about the Amis lifestyle, making process and Amis women, along the stairway between the ground, second and

³⁵ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

³⁶ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

third floors (see Figure 4.32). The viewers could enjoy the journey up the stairs to take part in my field trip. The physical movements also were related to the pottery making processes. In the exhibition, the museum rules did not allow viewers to touch the Amis pottery and so they could not be very engaged; however, I decided to show a film to cover the 'pain' of not being allowed to touch.



Figure 4.32: The exhibition space in the Museum of East Asian Art.³⁷

In the exhibition, I also decided to display photographs of the Amis women:

1. Lakaw (born 1932). The eldest woman in the tribe, she deals with almost all ceremonial processes.

³⁷ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.33: Lakaw's photograph.³⁸

2. Dogin (born 1953). If Lakaw is not in the village, she will need to play an important role in the pottery making process.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.34: Dogin's photograph. ³⁹

3. Palos (Born 1948). She is Byimu and Kulas's older sister.

³⁸ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

³⁹ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.35: Palos's photograph.⁴⁰

4. Lisin (born 1956). She invited us to stay in her house for one week.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.36: Lisin's photograph. ⁴¹

5. Byimu (Born 1957). She is Palos's younger sister.

⁴⁰ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

⁴¹ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.37: Byimu's photograph. ⁴²

From an Amis woman's viewpoint, I suggest I am also an 'other', an 'outsider'. As a Taiwanese woman working and living in the UK, I get the impression that I have been labeled as an outsider perhaps because of my skin colour or language (my skin is lighter than theirs and they speak the Amis language). It seems I do not belong anywhere.

My homeland, Taiwan, is in a terrible predicament, 'Few people think of Taiwan as a travel destination. Its place in the popular imagination of the West is more as a producer of computer chips and peripherals, as a political thorn in the side of China, and, for those who keep abreast of current events, as the small island that sprinted from the starting line of martial law to attain fully-fledged democracy in little more than a decade'.⁴³ It is a challenge to wash out the stereotype in other people's minds. How do Taiwanese people use perspectives to interpret our reputation as well as our overwhelming identities?

⁴² Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

⁴³ Insight Guides *Taiwan*. Singapore: APA Publications, 2006, p. 15.

I am seeking a solution of how to express the feelings of being 'other'. I wish racial prejudice would disappear, but it is impossible. One of my practice processes is trying to reduce prejudice and gender stereotypes, so I am focusing on identity. Identity represents complex layers in relation to social and gender contexts. My homeland, Taiwan, is at the edge of the developed world, and is situated in a colonial and post-colonial status.

This exhibition received huge interest, providing a great opportunity to let other people understand about the Amis pottery. It was very positive encouragement. These two exhibitions were self-funded projects. They provided me with an opportunity to learn how to negotiate with private museums and commercial galleries. I have realized I am able to have a professional role in the real world, not just in the academic world. I enjoyed sharing my research with a wider audience, not just between different scholars.

4.3 Critical reflection

During my research field trip, I had the opportunity to visit some Taiwanese female ceramicists' studios to discuss their practice. I would have liked to interview more ceramicists. However, I ran out of funding since as a PhD student it was very challenging to find sponsors. Therefore, I could not continue to interview more Taiwanese female ceramicists. Also, I had limited time to continue to do my PhD studies.

Marriage urges couples to become team workers and to help each other in Taiwan. I have realized some female ceramicists would like to make their own ceramics but, in reality, they need to help their husband's business to create 'craft' work. A number of women ceramicists had begun by helping their husband to deal with firing or washing pieces after bisque firings. Thus, they acted as assistants. After a couple of years, they began to make their own pieces. Their husbands always had a ceramic industry background and had the specialized skills of throwing, ceramic painting or knowledge about firing processes. Their husbands became their teacher to guide their process.

For example, 鄧淑慧 Sophia Den's husband and father-in-law have a wood firing kiln workshop: 竹南蛇窯 Zhu-Nan Snake Kiln.⁴⁴ The three of them help each other in the firing process and hold exhibitions. Also, she and her husband have a big ambition to save traditional Taiwanese kilns in different areas of Taiwan. They are often fighting with the local government and looking to protect old kilns and ceramics workshops in Taiwan.

Another example, Ming-Hsiang Hsu, is a ceramicist. She was a model maker and designer from New Taipei City Yingge Ceramics Museum. Her work is showing the reality of traditional Taiwanese culture, for example: traditional Taiwanese

⁴⁴ Zhu-Nan Snake Kiln 竹南蛇窯 2011 [Online] Available from: <http://www.skiln.com.tw> [Accessed 22 November 2016].

temples.⁴⁵ She bought materials and mixed up her own clay, glaze. Hsu visited different ancient house and temples in Taiwan. She used clay to reinterpret and blend her childhood memories and emotions, to create her ceramic work to convey the monuments of cultural relics. She is eager that her ceramic work can create public attention for the preservation of Taiwanese heritage (see Figure 4.38). In this work, she mentioned Taiwan has lost its roots because of the different colonial powers and the current sensitive tension with the Chinese government. During the interviews, she said most of her collectors did not know her political intention. I agreed the tension exists: Taiwan, looks very much like a 'democracy'; however, in reality, artists still need to be careful about showing their political opinions.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.38: Ming-Hsiang Hsu. Uprooted, 73x 47x93cm.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Hsu, Ming-Hsiang *Solo exhibition. New Taipei City Yingge Ceramics Museum*, 2014. [Online] Available from: <http://www.ceramics.ntpc.gov.tw/xmeventsnews/cont?xsmsid=0G316303113883598630&sid=0G336586517722395658> [Accessed 6 February 2017].

⁴⁶ Hsu, Ming-Hsiang *Ancient Emotional Ceramic Houses*. 許明香陶藝古厝情. Taichung: Kai Yue, 2008, p. 41.

Hsu, works with clay and learnt how to balance her artistic development. She created a sculptural ceramic hand, actually it is a candle stand (see Figures 4.39 and 4.40). The figures of her work were influenced by traditional Chinese drama. Her practice always relates to functional purpose because functional ceramics are still most Taiwanese people's taste in ceramics. She mentioned that the tea container and flower container still occupied a big market in Taiwan. She also made those objects because she is selling her ceramic works as her main income. During the interviews, she mentioned she has been very lucky to get a couple of collectors to support her life; they continue to order her work, so she has a very strong relationship with collectors.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.39: Ming-Hsiang Hsu. Hand in the Sky. 55x 30x76cm.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 53.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.40: Ming-Hsiang Hsu with her 'Hand in the Sky'. 55x 30x76cm ⁴⁸.

I have realized that in Taiwan, the collectors and ceramic artists have a very strong relationship. It was very interesting; however, I could not ask for more details about how they are building a connection.

During the interviews, a couple of the Taiwanese female ceramicists explained that the most useful tools when they were making ceramics were their fingers. Although they could, and did, make their own tools from materials like bamboo or Taiwanese wood, they considered their fingers to be their most amazing tool. I was told if they could not understand the movement of their own fingers and hands it would be very challenging to make their ceramic work. They also stated that throwing is about how to balance their body's 'air', from inside their body to the outside (environment), and how to lead the movement with the machine. Most Taiwanese female ceramicists have their own body movement which they can use to investigate their making processes. This was one of the reasons that they are also involved in practising Chi or Tai Chi (also known as 'shadowboxing') to deeply understand their body movement. For example: 張美華 Mei-Hwa Chang is a Tai Chi

⁴⁸ Hsu, Ming-Hsiang 'Ancient pottery series called for the protection of historic sites cannot wait'. *Epoch Times*, 2008. [Online] Available from: <http://www.epochtimes.com/b5/8/11/3/n2317385.htm> [Accessed 8 February 2017].

teacher and made a series of her ceramics related to her body movement with Tai Chi. Chang explains that:

Making pottery, I feel the clay in my hand is light, as are my body and the air I breathe. And yet a profound warmth is felt in my palms, in every cell of my body, in the air... and in my wet eyes. A similar feeling occurs when I practise Tai Chi. Devoted to the making of pottery and immersed in the dialectical process of Tai-chi's duality (full/empty, active/passive), I enter the visible and invisible realms of myself. I have no specific purpose but I am often moved.⁴⁹

Chang used her knees to create her ceramic form and she did not care about showing the broken pieces, because this was part of her making process. This photograph shows one of her ceramic works in her solo exhibition in New Taipei City Yingge Ceramic Museum (Figure 4.41).

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.41: Mei-Hwa Chang's ceramic work.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Chang, Mei-Hwa 張美華.形釋 *Transcending forms: Mei-Hwa Chang Solo Exhibition*. Taichung: Arthis Fine Art, 2010, p. 3.

⁵⁰ Chang, Mei-Hwa *Chang, Mei-Hwa's solo exhibition in New Taipei City Yingge Ceramic Museum in Taiwan*, Undated. [Online] Available from: <http://www.ceramics.tpc.gov.tw/zh-tw/News/Print.ycm?ct=2&pr=1231&Lang=TW> [Accessed 22 November 2016].

Another thing I have learnt from my field trip was I have realized the 'smooth glaze' ceramic surface is essential in Taiwan. It seems if people leave any marks on the ceramic surface this implies 'not professional makers'. Only one Taiwanese female ceramicist from my interviews, Lan-Mei Tang, focuses on wood firing and leaves her fingerprint marks on her work. Although she said nothing specifically about fingerprints, she clearly enjoyed creating ceramics through hand-building and leaving impressed marks from her fingers (Figure 4.42). For me, I have realized some Taiwanese female ceramicists need to live in-between 'traditional craft' and the 'art world', also between 'traditional pottery' and their 'creative world'.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.42: Lan-Mei Tang. Build Up.⁵¹

During my interviews with the Amis women, I have realized the character of the Amis' pottery: it is a woman's job, the clay comes from the local area. Their pottery making relates to an attitude of piousness and thanksgiving. Before any action such as digging the clay, preparing the clay prior to the firing process or removing the pots from the kiln, they need to have a ceremony for Miftik (their divine god). They use local, natural material to fire the pottery, such as dry rice shells and wood collected from the local ocean. They also follow the taboos for the firing process which are that the women are: not allowed to break wind; not allowed to sneeze; before the day of firing the pots the Amis cannot sleep with their husband; they must not joke around. Their firing process takes place outdoors and they do not use any electric kilns.

⁵¹ Tang, Lan-Mei. 起家 Build Up. Size: 23x27x48cm. Mixed clay. Wood Firing at 1300 degrees. Photograph from her book: 讓火說故事 *The Tales of Flames*. Taiwan. 2013, p. 31.

When I interviewed the elderly woman, Lakaw 莊阿妹, she told me that traditionally they used their knee (see Figure 4.43) to create the form and then used their fingers to pinch and push clay to build the bowl (see Figure 4.44). The significance of using body parts (knees, fingers) is a very important concept related to my practice. My body became part of my creative tools and signatures during my making process as well as that of the Amis women.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.43: Lisin used her knee to create the form of the pottery. ⁵²

⁵² Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4.44: The Amis women used their fingers to make pottery.⁵³

I also noticed that they used certain tools such as stones collected from the local beach or spoons to help with the shaping process (see Figure 4.45 and Figure 4.46).

⁵³ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.



Figure 4.45: The Amis used spoons or beach stones to help with the shaping process.⁵⁴



Figure 4.46: Lisin used spoons to polish her pottery edges.⁵⁵

The Amis and their handmade pottery tools also provided the ideas for my sculptural spoons (see Figure 4.46).

⁵⁴ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

⁵⁵ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.



Figure 4.47: The Amis handmade pottery tools.⁵⁶

Also, fingers are the Amis women's main tools to create their pottery. In terms of my own ceramic practice this simple and basic action has become my starting point. I use the tips of my thumb and forefinger to pinch and push porcelain to build the form.

I conveyed the oral history through exhibiting the outcomes of my research trip in a public space; it was very challenging to measure how successful was. It was not easy to collect feedback from visitors to gather information for the audience studies. However, I received some positive feedback from the museum and also from the gallery owner.

⁵⁶ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

It was successful to display my research in the different settings, engaging with different audiences in an urban city (Bristol) and a world heritage town (Bath). I put the Amis into the museum as a temporary collection. I displayed the urban Taiwanese female makers in the city, it seemed to match their environment. I realized that surroundings are an important factor for makers. During my interviews, I have listened as Taiwanese female ceramicists explained their challenges: financial construction, weakening traditional communities (modern juggling of work/life balance), mental and physical preparation (breath/meditation). I made a decision that I wanted to create non-functional ceramics to respond to these Taiwanese female ceramicists' artistic life conditions. However, my ceramic work still has a 'functional' purpose to provide a platform to help other people understand about living in-between the craft and art worlds, Taiwan and Britain, East and West.

After I finished my field trip and investigated traditional Taiwanese social rituals to create a series of ceramic spoons, I realized that it is a big challenge for people to understand other people's culture without having first-hand experience of that culture so making became my way to express my Taiwanese cultural identity.

In the next chapter, I will explore how my ceramic practice as research evolved to negotiate and construct my cross-cultural identity.

Chapter 5: Creative practice

5.1 Introduction

Over the course of my PhD, I went through different stages of creative development, producing outputs with different themes: 'Sculptural Spoons', '8 Hours and Fingerprints', 'Bananas' and 'Traditional Chinese Characters'. Each stage linked to my original research question:

How is my Taiwanese cultural identity expressed through making and how might ceramic practice be used to develop a visual language to communicate a personal experience of 'in-betweenness' to a Western audience.

My research aims are to explore the impact that living in a state of 'in-betweenness' can have on perceptions of self, to develop a visual language to communicate this experience and to explore my own expression of cultural identity in relation to theory in the field. In this chapter I will look at these aims and discuss how my creative outputs helped me address the issues raised.

During my PhD studies, I realized it might be difficult for other people to understand my work. My creative pieces are a complex combination of the 'literal', the 'abstract' and 'metaphorical'. Also, some of my works relate specifically to Taiwanese culture and context, so it was very difficult to pin down a single meaning. I wondered if knowledge of the culture and context were necessary for my viewers to understand my work. Therefore, I made the decision to let my work have freedom to 'travel' to different locations and cultures – to different cross-cultural situations. For me, the creative process does not end with the finished object. It continues as the object is exhibited in different environments and as different audiences interact with it, integrating the concept of 'in-betweenness' with studio practice development.

Therefore, my ceramic practice was developed in three main locations: Bath Spa School of Art and Design and during two artist-residencies (in Denmark and Taiwan). I have presented my main ceramic works (Sculptural spoons, 8 Hours, Fingerprints, Bananas, Traditional Chinese Characters) in different cultural environments including France and Germany, and have considered the responses to them.

When I exhibited my Taiwanese ceramic bananas in Germany the original meaning was lost because the audience associated bananas with their own culture: before reunification, East Germans did not have access to bananas. When the Berlin Wall came down, West Germans brought bananas as gifts for the East Germans.

I wondered if the meaning of my work 'shifted' in these different spaces. In the beginning I worried that the original meaning would be lost but later I realized that rather than losing meaning, more layers of meaning were added and my work become 'richer' and more 'juicy'.

Rather than providing concrete answers to the research questions, my creative works acted like catalysts: enabling me to experience the challenges of different cross-cultural environments; creating platforms for viewers to question my use of materials, choice of colours, and the meaning behind my work; and challenging me to understand how my work, like myself, fits into different contexts. My work is situated in the gap between questions and answers. One limitation of my PhD studies was that I did not carry out structured audience studies to investigate how other people responded to my work and to analyze different cultural backgrounds and attitudes.

Chapter 5 focusses in turn on each creative output produced for the PhD. It uses each output to address a question relating to the overall aims of my research.

Table 5.1: Research questions and creative outputs.

Question	Creative output
How have my field trip experiences influenced my creative practice?	Sculptural Spoons (Section 5.2)
How have my perceptions of self been affected by my experience of being an ‘outsider’, living in-between two cultures?	8 Hours Fingerprints (Section 5.3)
Can I use Taiwanese bananas as a symbol to convey aspects of my cultural identity?	Bananas (Section 5.4)

Section 5.5 explores my artist-residency at New Taipei Yingge Museum in Taiwan and my ‘Traditional Chinese Characters’ which were created for my installation: The Language of Ceramics.

5.2 How have my field trip experiences influenced my creative practice?

5.2.1 Introduction to the final work: *Sculptural Spoons*



Figure 5.1: Wen-Hsi Chen *Sculptural Spoons*.¹

During my field trip to Taiwan, I interviewed Taiwanese female ceramicists, I also wondered about what kind of objects could address my research questions. At that time, I was thinking that the process that changes a girl to become a woman, wife, mother is marriage. I wanted to explore gender in Taiwanese wedding culture through ceramics, so in my early stage of studio practice I was exploring the Taiwanese wedding ceremony and its traditions (please see Appendix 6: My early stage studio practice development). My mother's wedding was held more than twenty-five years ago, but the objects are still kept in good condition (see Figure 5.2 showing my mother's wedding ceremony ceramic cups). This inspired me to

¹ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi. Porcelain. Handmade. 35x70 x 32 cm.

create a Taiwanese wedding ceremony setting in my PhD progression show (see Figure 5.3).² I combined traditional Taiwanese wedding ceremony items with a white space, this space looked like my mother's wedding cups collection box. My mother's box has sections for each item; however, I decided to bring a freedom for these objects, letting the objects live in the space and bringing the traditional social ritual into the West. The objects negotiated their own identity and they have a particular purpose in the wedding. However, these functions disappeared in my setting and the meaning was lost.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.2: My mother's wedding cups.³

² Chen, Wen-Hsi *PhD progression show*, 2014. [Online] Available from: <http://www.wenhsichenceramics.com/phd-progression-show.html> [Accessed 12 February 2017].

³ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.



Figure 5.3: Wen-Hsi Chen. The Taiwanese wedding ceremony.⁴

I kept exploring the possibility of Taiwanese wedding ceremony objects and found that the wedding ceremony wooden cake-moulds were very inspiring for me. The smell of the wood reminded me of Taiwanese camphor trees, and my childhood memories. As I lived in a Japanese wooden house, the ‘百蟻 white ants’ liked to eat our wood so we used Taiwanese camphor oil against the white ants. The smell from the traditional wedding ceremony wooden cake-moulds was associated with the atmosphere of my home: for me, it is a ‘home’ smell (see Figure 5.4).

⁴ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.4: Different types of wooden wedding-cake mould.⁵

I was wondering how Western people would ‘read’ Taiwanese wedding ceremony wooden cake-moulds because people in the West are not familiar with these objects. I was struggling to create my ceramic work to respond these moulds. At the same time, I got an opportunity to take part in a project called ‘Muse: the collection inspires’⁶ to create a piece of artwork for the Holburne Museum in Bath. The Holburne museum project gave me a new perspective to look at the moulds. I tried to look at them as ‘objects’, as if I did not know what they were, and then I thought about the spoon-like shape of the objects.

Spoons are widely used in cooking and serving. Spoons are also used in food preparation to measure, mix and stir ingredients. Present day spoons are made from metal, wood, porcelain or plastic. Spoons can also be used as a musical instrument. From historical narratives, in 18th Century Europe, people used to carry their spoons when they went out to eat food. Moore explains that ‘Spoons were given as christening gifts because, like other eating implements, they were

⁵ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

⁶ Chen, Wen-Hsi *Muse: the collection inspires*, 2014. [Online] Available from: <http://www.wenhsichenc ceramics.com/muse-the-collection-inspires.html> [Accessed 12 February 2017].

not supplied at table and therefore everyone carried their own. Social status was reflected in the type of spoon carried.’⁷ The spoon was a personal object, a private possession, like a handbag, a watch, a shoe. Nowadays, this has changed. Spoons are less personal items and have become ‘public’ objects.

I was using a functional object however I was creating a sculptural quality. My aim was to create harmony of form that did not have to conform to function. In Taiwan, we use ceramic spoons, but in the UK spoons are usually made from silver-coloured metal. The form and the material relate to attitudes concerning food habits, gesture and process of thinking. ‘Spoons have always been popular as gifts, apart from the more usual occasions such as christenings, they have been given as token of love and faith at weddings and as memorials at funerals.’⁸ Nowadays do spoons continue to have meaning beyond their context? In the 17th Century spoons were used as personal objects that were carried by everyone when they went out to eat food. But nowadays, who carries their own spoons?

I developed one of my ceramic sculptures called ‘Sculptural Spoons’. After I came back to Britain, I started to create possible bridges between my supporting research and my studio practice. I started to photograph the objects and think about how I could give the objects meaning beyond the limits of their traditional meanings. I respect the beauty of the objects but I wanted to challenge their traditional meanings which put pressure on Taiwanese women. Also, I was thinking about using/shifting different materials (See Figure 5.5).

⁷ Moore, Simon *Spoons 1650-2000*. Princes Risborough: Shire, 2012, pp. 6-7.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 4.



Figure 5.5: Wen-Hsi Chen's studio photos.⁹

5.2.2 Development of the work

During my field trip, I also noticed that the Amis used certain tools such as stones collected from the local beach or spoons to help with the shaping process (see Figure 5.6 and Figure 5.7).

⁹ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.



Figure 5.6: The Aims used spoons or beach stones to help with the shaping process.¹⁰



Figure 5.7: Lisin used spoons to polish her pottery edges.¹¹

I decided to use the spoon as a theme of one of my ceramic sculptures. The shape of my Sculptural Spoons is simple and made by hand and they have a relationship with the Amis and their handmade pottery tools. (See Figure 5.8).

¹⁰ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

¹¹ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.



Figure 5.8: The Amis handmade pottery tools.¹²

Also, fingers are the Amis women's main tools to create their pottery. In terms of my own ceramic practice this simple and basic action has become my starting point. I use the tips of my thumb and forefinger to pinch and push porcelain to build the form.

I looked at the work of the artist Xiao Jing Yan ¹³ who migrated from China to North America. Her work used traditional Chinese materials and techniques, set in a Western context. Her artworks are a series of stories about how fragile an

¹² Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

¹³ Yan, Xiao Jing website. 2014. [Online] Available from: <http://yanxiaojing.com/> [Accessed 1 October 2016].

immigrant's life is, and how challenging it is to find a space to survive. In her artist statement she states:

I use the minimalist concepts and theatricality of my work to expose the intricate layers of my internal world where Chinese culture, training and traditions inspire my work so I can build a bridge of survival, safety and adaptation to the foreign land that molds and informs my work.¹⁴

I strongly identify with this statement. I want to use my creative practice research for my PhD as a bridge between my culture and that of the West. As a Taiwanese woman, how can I live in a foreign land (Britain) and express my cultural identity through my ceramics? Xiao Jing's installation work: Bridge (Figure 5.9) is made of 1,364 Chinese ceramic soup spoons, which are intended to represent the traditional typical Chinese three-arched bridge.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.9: Xiao Jing Yan. Bridge.¹⁵

¹⁴ Yan, Xiao Jing *Artist statement*, 2014. [Online] Available from: <http://yanxiaojing.com/artist-statement/> [Accessed 1 October 2016].

¹⁵ Xiao Jing Yan's bridge, photograph came from Xiao Jing Yan's website, [Online] Available: http://yanxiaojing.com/portfolio_pages/bridge/ [Accessed 1 October 2016]. Medium: ceramic spoons, dimension: 1.7 x1.5 x 6 meters.2009.

Xiao Jing Yan says: 'standing on the bridge, one can have a different perspective. It's a place; it's a space beyond. It could represent transformation - you are not the same person who crossed from the other side. I view myself as a bridge linking two cultures together, forever suspended and never really crossed'¹⁶.

Her work shows how her new life is challenging. The bridge can be understood as a connection between different areas. However, the bridge could also be understood to represent a border control, creating tension between two different locations and cultures. Her work suggests the two sides will never be connected or fit together.

The Danish artist Stine Jespersen¹⁷ has also used Chinese ceramic spoons in her sculpture (See Figure 5.10). In an email to me she wrote:

In 2007 I [spent] 7 weeks at an artist residency-stay at the Pottery Workshop in Jingdezhen in China. Jingdezhen has mass produced porcelain for many hundreds of years and my project became about the local mass production. I did not make the spoons myself but used already made spoons. I used an everyday object, like this [Chinese] soup spoon, and gave it new life and new meaning in a unique sculpture. I was looking for the beauty in [a] not very beautiful world of mass production and hard working poor people, working under bad conditions. Giving [their] work the status it deserved.¹⁸

¹⁶ Smith, Matthew Ryan 'Of clouds and cocoons: An interview with Xiao Jing Yan'. *Yishu- Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, 14 (4), 2015.

¹⁷ Jespersen, Stine website, Undated. [Online] Available from: <http://www.stinejespersen.com/> [Accessed 1 October 2016].

¹⁸ Jespersen, Stine *Email to Wen-Hsi Chen*, 7 September 2016.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.10: Stine Jespersen's sculptural spoons.¹⁹

It seems both used ready-made spoons to create ceramic sculptures to explore their own experience and stories. I decided to use my fingers to create hand-made individual spoons and then used each individual spoon as part of the sculptural elements to construct a sculptural porcelain piece inspired by how Taiwanese aboriginal Amis women used branches to build their outdoor firing kiln (see Figures 5.11 and 5.12) and spoons to polish their pottery edges.

¹⁹ Jespersen, Stine *Sculpturs*, Undated. [Online] Available from: <http://www.stinejespersen.com/Sculpturs> [Accessed 12 February 2017].



Figure 5.11: Amis women used branches to build their outdoor firing kiln.²⁰



Figure 5.12: Wen-Hsi Chen's Sculptural Spoons.²¹

²⁰ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi. Taken during my research field trip in Taiwan in 2013.

²¹ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi. Handmade. Porcelain. Size: 40 x 70 x 60 cm.

5.2.3 Critical reflection

I was inspired by the Amis's traditional way of using their knees to create a form first, and then using their fingers as their main tools for the making process. They made their own wooden tools but they also used 'modern metal spoons' to polish the edge of the pottery to combine their very traditional and modern ways of making.

The Sculptural Spoons were influenced by the society in which I lived for twenty-five years (Taiwan). My homeland experience had a strong influence, particularly traditional social rituals despite my urban upbringing. During my field trip to Taiwan, the seven days I stayed with the indigenous Amis in their village provided me with a vivid and colourful influence on my research process. The way that the Amis women constructed their outdoor firing step-by-step, in silence, appealed to me very much; their actions were very careful and respectful of the material and process. I also respected the emotional and financial struggle of the urban women I met; their need to keep the aspect of 'functional' ceramics alongside their artistic sculptural life. Being an 'artist', as such, is a daydream.

For Sculptural Spoons (see Figure 5.13 and Figure 5.14) the main material is porcelain which is often seen as representing purity. However, my artwork is challenging this stereotype. I have two porcelain main-body colours. One is mixed with a powerful colouring cobalt oxide and blue body stain. The other is mixed mostly with the colourant iron oxide.

Mixing up colour and material elements emphasizes the idea that the world is mixed with different cultures and people. This mixed process focused on the idea that purity of identity is impossible. Identity as represented through this process is made up of complex layers. From the different layers of colour in my work it can be seen that dark and light blue and brown are not following any set order (such as

dark to light or light to dark). The raw materials are negotiating with the pure white body of the porcelain.



Figure 5.13: Wen-Hsi Chen's Sculptural Spoons.²²

I made the spoon's handle and bowl by hand as one piece instead of using ready-made spoons or mould-made spoons. From this handmade process, I learnt how to use porcelain to create the fragile long handle of the spoons. My Sculptural Spoons are challenging the stereotype of everyday objects and how the way we treat the object is connected to our attitudes and experience. I showed my Sculptural Spoons in the group exhibition: *Muse: the collection inspires*²³ in the Hoburne Museum, Bath (See Figure 5.14).

²² Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi. Handmade, Porcelain, Size: 60 x 35 x 40 cm. 2013

²³ Bath Spa University *Muse: the collection inspires*. From 10 October 2014 to 26 October. The Holburne Museum, Bath. You can the news from Bath School of Art and Design, 2012. [Online] Available from: <http://artdesign.bathspa.ac.uk/news/muse->



Figure 5.14: Wen-Hsi Chen Sculptural Spoons in the Holburne Museum.²⁴

I was inspired by the funeral spoon (See Figure 5.15) in the Holburne Museum because it was very surprising to see that this spoon could relate to death not just relate solely to a function. It also reminded me of the time when I lived in Cardiff, and I had the opportunity see Welsh Love Spoons (See Figure 5.16). These spoons were directly linked to Welsh cultural identity so I decided to create a link to my handmade spoons. When I talked to Susan Morgan about my spoons she replied to my email saying that the ‘The Love Spoon in Wales is a powerful cultural symbol carved from wood, which brings to mind love, betrothal and marriage; Wen-Hsi has created an especially Taiwanese version of these symbols.’²⁵ It was my intention to use the basic spoon form to engage with cultural identity.

[the-collection-inspires-bath-spa-at-the-holburne/](#) [Accessed 21 October 2016].

²⁴ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi, Wen-Hsi Chen Sculptural Spoons. Size: 120 x 95 x 40cm.

²⁵ Morgan, Susan *Email to Wen-Hsi Chen*, 9 September 2015. Susan Morgan is a research student in the School of English, communication and Philosophy in Cardiff University. I sent an email to her about feedback.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.15: The Holburne Museum's funeral spoon 1664/65.²⁶

²⁶ Funeral spoon, Amsterdam, silver-gilt, 1664/65. The Holburne Museum.
[Online] Available: <http://collections.holburne.org/object-s343> (Accessed on 17 October 2016)

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.16: Welsh love spoon.²⁷

I made my Sculptural Spoons (See Figures 5.17 and 5.18) to have a relationship between the real and surreal as I wanted to highlight the importance of the shadow they cast. The Sculptural Spoons are negotiating different cultural contexts; these spoons were very fragile and easily lost balance in the space; each individual spoon supports the next. This idea asks the questions: How should functional objects be looked at in our daily life? How is an object's presence associated with personal experience and identity? My Sculptural Spoons have many overlapping meanings. However, it is challenging to get people to think about them as more than just ceramic representations of functional objects.

The Sculptural Spoons also overlap with my field trip experience. The Taiwanese ceramic makers need to sell their ceramics to make a living, so most makers create functional objects as well as their dream object-ceramic sculptures. These two

²⁷ Tim Bowen Antiques *Welsh Love spoons*, Undated.[Online] Available from: <http://www.timbowenantiques.co.uk/antique-archive/welsh-love-spoon> [Accessed on 17 October 2016].

complementary creative mindsets very much influenced the first stage of my creative practice.



Figure 5.17: Wen-Hsi Chen Sculptural Spoons in the Holburne Museum.²⁸

²⁸ Photograph by Morgan, Susan.



Figure 5.18: Wen-Hsi Chen Sculptural Spoons in the Holburne Museum.²⁹

²⁹ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

5.3 How have my perceptions of self been affected by my experience of being an 'outsider', living in-between two cultures?

5.3.1 Introduction to the final works: 8 Hours, Fingerprints

8 Hours



Figure 5.19: Wen-Hsi Chen. 8 Hours ¹

This is my poem expressing my feelings about living in the 8-hours' time-gap between Taiwan and the UK (see Figure 5.19). I decided to show traditional Chinese writing and English at the same time to show the different types of thinking and structure of the two languages. I wanted to express the concept of living in-between; the poems are an expression of myself and therefore a form of my creative process.

¹ Wen-Hsi Chen. 8 Hours. Handmade. Porcelain. Plastic tubes. 2014. Size: 120 x 100 x 50 cm. Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

作品名稱: 28800 秒

早安=晚安

臺灣和英國八小時的時差

家鄉和異鄉 流動在 288800 秒中

月亮和太陽在時差中銜接傳遞

白天和夜晚 竟巧妙地交棒

餐桌上 是早餐也是晚餐

時間的餐盤忙著輪流上菜

我漂浮在時差兩地的生活

諦視一個有趣的時間流

飄渺 無形

展場八個圓 佈滿創作者的手印

傾訴時間流動 與時差的對話

指紋是每個人的專屬 獨一無二

瓷土圈捏塑每一枚指紋

最貼膚的身分辨識

巧妙的簽名形式

圓形象徵著時間無止境的流轉

不同顏色的圓圈

詮釋看不到也摸不到的時差

記註在時差中的酸甜苦辣

是心情的顏色

異鄉的生活

文化的差異 文化的認同

時間是用來沉澱自我和調適流轉

身在英國 心繫臺灣

遠方的家人！遙遠的朋友！

輪流捎來的關懷

只有溫度 距離不會因此而降溫

早安=晚安

Translation:²

Good morning, good evening

Taiwan and Britain have an eight hours' time gap

Homeland and foreign land flowing in 28800 seconds

Sun and moon changes in different time zones

Day swaps to night and night swaps to day

On my table, breakfast is dinner, dinner is breakfast

Time passes through each meal

My life is floating in between,

Time flow is an interesting process

Ethereal, Invisible

Eight circular forms are displayed in the show,

This highlights my fingerprints, my identity

The conversation is between time flow and time gap

Everybody's fingerprints are unique

Each fingerprint is constructed through porcelain

Fingerprints are the closest thing to personal identity

Fingerprints are the artists' signatures

Circular forms are a symbol where time has no end.

Different colour circular forms,

Colour symbolises different hour gaps

Eight colours; eight hours' difference

But time isn't tangible like these ceramics

Happiness and sadness aren't tangible like these ceramics

Changing colours, shifting emotions

² With translation edited by Adele Milton and Martin Harman

I am living in a foreign land
Cultural differences, identity shifts
Time is the only way to allow people to ponder and think.
My body is in Britain, my heart is in Taiwan
My family, my friends
They care for me
Over the long distances we keep in touch

Good morning, good evening

Fingerprints



Figure 5.20: Wen-Hsi Chen. Fingerprints.³

³ Size: 60 x 52 x 3 cm, Porcelain, Enamel, Lustre, Gold, Hand-built, 2015.
Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

This is my poem expressing my feelings about my own identity (see Figure 5.20):

指紋代表著每一個人獨特的記號，
是身份的一小部份。
每個手指末端的指腹，
呈現凹凸的紋路，
借用自己的食指和大拇指接觸陶土，
而形成紋路的印記。
留在陶土上的印痕，
成為我作品的一部分。
當胎兒在母體中，
發育三至四個月時，
指紋就已經形成。
兒童在成長期間指紋會改變，
直到青春期十四歲左右時才定型。
所以指紋是每個孩子和母親的聯繫過程，
象徵血脈相連的記憶。

陶土是大地之母，
我的指紋印藉由施力和擠壓的過程，
製作出一片又一片微小的指紋片，
群居簇擁，
組織聚集每一片片的指紋片，
在重新建構中並思考自己血脈與身份的價值。
對我而言，
每按壓一次指紋在陶土的過程，
就是一個生命的省思的過程，
同時也是一種透過勞力的運動，
剖析人、事、物，自我、本我、他我的真相。

留在陶土上的手指紋路，
可能清楚，
也可能不清楚，
模糊的指紋是不是在失焦中文化認同呢？

Translation:⁴

Fingerprints represent each person's unique mark
Is the identity a small part?
Each tip of the finger, showing patterns of the skin
I borrow my own index finger and thumb to make contact with the clay
The formation skin patterns mark the surface of the clay.
The prints that remain on clay are part of my work.

When the fetus is growing inside the mother,
Development happens within three to four months,
the fingerprint has been formed.
Children grow up, their fingerprints change until the adolescence of about
fourteen years old

The fingerprint is the process of contact between each child and mother
A symbol of blood connected memories.

Clay is the mother of the earth
My fingerprints force and squeeze the clay
This produces a small piece of a fingerprint
Multiples create a Gregarious, organized gathering of each piece
I create a reconstruction to think about my own blood and identity value.
This becomes the process of pressing
Pressing the fingerprint in the clay is a meditation process of life.

⁴ With translation edited by Martin Harman

It is also a process of analyzing people,
things, things, self, self, self,

Leave the finger on the clay
Maybe it will be clear, or maybe not
My ambiguous fingerprints are part of my cultural identity?

I decided to write the poems in the different languages as a visible way to play. I wrote this poem to show how living 'in-between' is enhancing other people's understanding of East and West and shifting this identity in the present world:

In-between	在之中
Between Wen-Hsi and Vicky	在文曦和維琪之中
Between Taiwan and Britain	在臺灣和英國之中
Between Taiwanese and English	在臺灣語和英語之中
Between push and pinch	在擠和壓之中
Between order and out-of-order	在秩序和失去秩序之中
Between low and high	在高和低之中
Between line and form	在線條和形狀之中
Between you and I	在你和我之中
Between the same and different	在相同和不同之中
Between edge and centre	在邊緣和中心之中
Between official and unofficial	在正式和非正式之中
Between academic world and artistic world	在學術世界和藝術世界之中
Between theory and practice	在理論和實作之中
Between text and history	在文本和歷史之中
Between yellow and white	在黃色和白色之中
Between East and West	在東方和西方之中
Between making and writing	在做和寫之中

The writing shows two types of language systems, I found it was challenging to find 'appropriate' words to shift between two languages, and keep the meanings still similar or the same. I used traditional Chinese characters to write my poems, I did not use Taiwanese because I received an education in which traditional Chinese characters are the Taiwanese official writing and language.

Huang states that 'Culturally, Chinese identity is superordinate to Taiwanese identity and the two are largely compatible.'⁵ It reminded me I studied for my BA in Chinese literature at a time when Taiwanese people started to question whether Chinese literature was our central literature. Achebe states that:

A national literature is one that takes the whole nation for its province and has a realized or potential audience throughout its territory. In other words a literature that is written in the national language.⁶

Nowadays, Taiwanese literature has become popular in Taiwan and some people have started to learn how to write Taiwanese. However, I am very ashamed I cannot write Taiwanese.

Hai also explored the concept of living in-between and explains that:

'Border work, then, as undertaken by the in-betweens, by those who both belong and unbelong, who can offer crucial perspectival shifts, can have liberatory potential, because it can undo binaristic and hierarchical categories

⁵ Huang, Li-Li *et al.* "'The double identity" of Taiwanese Chinese: A dilemma of politics and culture rooted in history'. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 7 (2), 2004, pp. 149-168, p. 149.

⁶ Achebe, Chinua. 'The African writer and the English language'. In: Williams, Patrice and Laura Chrisman *eds. Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory a Reader*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993, p. 429.

of opposition, offering useful critique and reconceptualization of either side of an opposition - be it cultural, political, or intellectual.’⁷

In Min Jeong Song’s PhD thesis *Mechanisms of in-betweenness: through visual experiences of glass*,⁸ she explains her studio practice as embodying: ‘the idea of in-betweenness by experimenting with glassblowing and casting processes which question the conventional relationship of surface/depth, control/accident’⁹.

Song explains that the most literal level, “in-between” designates spatial and temporal realms. It implies the continuity of things that cannot be separated or cut off cleanly.’¹⁰ From her writings, the reader cannot see her personal life experience between South Korea and Britain. Perhaps, exploring personal experience is still very challenging in the academic voice. However, for me, my ceramic practice is directly relating to my personal experience so they have a close relationship.

5.3.2 Development of the work

‘8 Hours’ is a timeline installation structured as a physical (spiral journey). The important aspects of this journey are transforming the sense of living ‘in between’ in the limited space and time. This is a group of sculptural wall pieces, which combine porcelain circular pieces with plastic tubes to suggest the time gaps representing the eight hours’ time zone difference between Taiwan and Britain.

I am living in between those two time zones. Everyday when I wake up in the UK, the hour of waking has already passed in Taiwan. This condition is similar to how the fantasy writer Ursula K. Le Guin wrote that ‘...we like to think we live in

⁷ Hai, Ambreen ‘Border work, border trouble: Postcolonial feminism and the Ayah in Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Cracking India*’. *Modern Fiction Studies*, 46, (2), 2000, pp. 379-426, p. 381.

⁸ Song, Min Jeong *Mechanisms of in-betweenness: through visual experiences of glass*. Ph.D. thesis, Royal College of Art, 2014.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 19.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 21

daylight, but half world is always dark....'¹¹ This situation leads me to reflect on what is real time in my living context.

In this installation, the porcelain circular pieces were assembled using my own fingerprints one by one. Each finger imprint is unique, and when put together the shape looks like small petals. The petals represent my small voices as well as my position in Britain, which is tiny, barely visible or invisible. This small sense of existence is translated into clay in an attempt to try to understand and communicate to others this sense of smallness and lack of voice. I used 'high value' material, porcelain, to create my work. However, my value as a human being seems not very important. Compared with the porcelain, I am cheaper than clay because my fingerprints are not valued. This is the tension between me and the material.

In my 8 Hours work, I was influenced by an installation work by LB, initials for a collaboration between artists Sabina Lang and Daniel Baumann who have worked together since 1990¹². Their work refers to time and they are using aluminium tubes not plastic. They created an installation called Tues # 2 (See Figure 5.21) made with pipes to make a big wall to separate the space. I have been influenced by the way they use aluminium material and this reminded me of time as a person who is traveling in a different space. From this inspiration, I considered the nature of my main material, which is clay. What is the relationship between two materials: plastic and clay in relation to my Taiwanese homeland's history?

¹¹ Wood, Susan 'Introduction'. In: Le Guin, Ursula K *The Language of the Night - Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*. London: The women's Press, 1989, p. 5.

¹² Lang, Sabina and Daniel Baumann *Sommer-Akademie im Zentrum Paul Klee*, 2006. [Online] Available from: <http://www.sommerakademie.zpk.org/en/former-academies/2006/fellows/sabina-lang-and-daniel-baumann.html> [Accessed 5 December 2016]. They have been living in Burgdorf, Switzerland.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.21: Tues #2.¹³

The use of plastic is central to my piece, it reminded me of the international Taiwanese ceramic artist Leon Ah¹⁴ who explains that ‘The new time did wash out many good crafts, and plastic took over. We lost many craft aesthetics, but the foundation was still there, along with old masters showing and maintaining their good techniques. This is the basis of Taiwanese crafts today.’¹⁵ It seems that plastic took over from Taiwanese ceramic work, and now most people prefer to buy cheaper and lighter items to use. Furthermore, from the post-war modernization period in Taiwan ‘By the end of the 1960s, thanks to the advent of plastics and metals, as well as environmental policy that prohibited the mining of Peitous soil and the burning of bituminous coal, the development of the ceramic industry took

¹³ Lang, Sabina and Daniel Baumann *Tubes #2*, 2008. [Online] Available from: <http://langbaumann.com/> [Accessed 5 January 2016]. Technique: aluminium tubes, anodized dimensions: 4.8 x 3.5 m, courtesy: Galerie Loevenbruck Volta 4, Basel CH. Stacked between two movable walls were 30 cm sections of aluminium tubing with various diameters. In the center, a large circular opening with a diameter of approximately 210 cm allowed visitors to enter the room.

¹⁴ Ah, Leon ‘*Memories of Elementary School*’ and the *Spirit of Yixing Tea Ware* July 10, 2010 – September 25, 2010, American Museum of Ceramic Art, Undated. [Online] Available from: <http://www.amoca.org/ah-leon/> [Accessed 6 January 2016].

¹⁵ Scanlan, Jennifer ‘Crafting an identity’ *American Craft Magazine*, 2010, August/September. [Online] Available from: <http://craftcouncil.org/magazine/article/taiwan-crafting-identity> [Accessed 22 November 2016].

several new twists. '16 From this perspective, I decided to use straight plastic tubes to represent linear time. Each tube is marked with a 3 D laser printer to show the hours (Figure 5.22).



Figure 5.22: Time marks.¹⁷

Each porcelain piece is constructed in a circular shape. This suggests a cyclic relationship between person and time. Time is not just linear also it is recycled so there is no-start and no end. This represents the fact that I am a person not a piece of plastic and the clay circles represent my personal identity living both in the present and past due to the eight hours time gap between Taiwan and Britain (Figure 5.23).

¹⁶ Hsiu-ling, Chuang *Timeless Formosa: Taiwanese Ceramic Culture*. Taipei: Taipei County Yingge Ceramic Museum, 2009, p. 13.

¹⁷ Time marks from 3D laser printer in Bath Spa University. Photograph by Wen-Hsi Chen,.

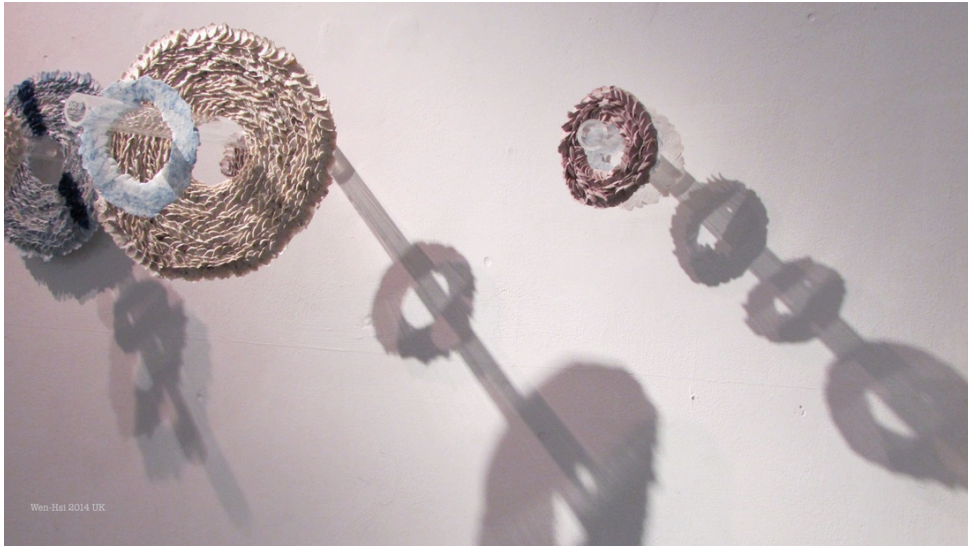


Figure 5.23: Wen-Hsi Chen's 8 Hours.¹⁸

For me, living in the-between, it is not just about two cultures. The tension is also between the real world and the artist's inner mind. The ceramic artist Sergei Isupov¹⁹ (1963-) was born in Russia, now lives in the USA. He says 'I don't know where I am real – is it in life or in the work?'²⁰ I am inspired by his surreal and hand painted sculptural porcelain artwork. However, I decided to not do these surreal and literal paintings on my ceramic surface; I decided not to put any images on my ceramics, because I do not want to use images, for example Taiwanese women figures or heritage sites and so on, to represent any atmosphere or exotic representation of Asia. It was a challenge for my ceramic practice, because there was no pattern or images to deal with my cultural identity. Hall explains that:

The first position defines 'cultural identity' in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more

¹⁸ Photograph by Wen-Hsi Chen.

¹⁹ Isupov, Sergei website, Undated [Online] Available from: <http://sergeiisupov.com/> [Accessed on 13 October 2016].

²⁰ Jones, David 'Breaking through illusions: Sergei Isupov'. *Ceramics Art and Perception*, 91, 2013, pp. 92-95, p. 93.

superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with shared history and ancestry hold in common.²¹

In some way, if I used an image from Taiwan to put on my ceramic surface, I felt my work would be very superficial and dominated by the 'direct' and occupied by my intention of dealing with cross-cultural situations.

Sin-Ying Ho²² (Cassandra) is an artist who has experienced post-colonial Hong Kong and transfers this knowledge to her ceramic art. She explains that 'my own postcolonial examination is based on growing up in Hong Kong, migrating to Canada, living in the United States and maintaining ties with communities in three countries'²³

Ho's work, *Music* (see Figure 5.24), seems to imply that music is a universal language to communicate to everyone no matter what their national identity. Her work integrates various images of cultural symbols, such as Chinese drama figures, Chinese characters and Western musicians.

²¹ Hall, Stuart 'Cultural identity and diaspora'. In Mongia, Padmini ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory a Reader*. London: Arnold, 1996, pp. 110-111.

²² Ho, Sin-Ying Website, Undated. [Online] Available from: <http://sinyingho.com> [Accessed 23 November 2016].

²³ Chambers, Ruth et al. eds. *Utopic Impulses Contemporary Ceramic Practice*. Vancouver: Ronsdale, 2007, p. 249.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.24: Sin-Ying Ho, Music.²⁴

She uses Western ceramic techniques, such as digital decal printing, to print the images and displays them on the ceramic surface. She also mentions that, 'inspired by classical forms, [she] was influenced by the multi-part mold making methods in Shiwan (Shekwan), in Fushan (Foshan), Gangzhou (Canton)'.²⁵ Her work combines Eastern and Western ceramic making processes to discuss her own situation and experience. In her web biography, it says:

Ho's unique cultural background as a Chinese immigrant and her connection with Jingdezhen enable her to create ceramic sculptures using traditional Chinese firing techniques and materials, and infuse them within a contemporary sensibility. Her work reflects the international nature of her life experience and resonates with the complexity of contemporary

²⁴ Music. Porcelain, high fire reduction, hand painted cobalt pigment, computer decal transfer, terra sigillata. 16" x 8" x 8". Photograph from Sin-Ying Ho's website. [Online] Available from: http://sinyingho.com/portfolio_3 [Accessed 24 November 2016].

²⁵ Ho, Sin-Ying, Website.

global culture. Her artworks are known for their classical forms and their manipulation resulting in unique, new forms reminiscent of cubism and abstract expressionism.²⁶

Also, her work addresses the issue of her personal identity through different ceramic making processes, approaching her own perspective of living between East and West. McKenzie suggests that:

Hong Kong-born Sin-Ying Ho played a pivotal role as translator for her then teacher, Walter Ostrom, in establishing an East-West interchange between NSCAD and Sanbao, near Jingdezhen. A product of a different place and generation Ho's work embraces the fragmentation of Postmodernism. It is steeped in her own experience of cross-cultural tension.²⁷

I like Ho's work when she uses images reflecting cultural symbols. However, I wonder whether the 'ready-made' images already have their own identities, which contain specific meanings. These images may dominate the ceramic work and mislead the viewers on how they look at the work. For my own ceramic practice, I have chosen not to use 'ready-made' images. I decided to create 'images' by hand instead of using digital decal printing. However, I tried to use 'ready-made' figures in relation to develop my practice. (Please see Appendix 7)

I used my fingers to create my fingerprint work. My inspiration came from my field trip, where I saw how the Amis women used their fingers push and pinch clay to their pottery (see Chapter 4). My finger movements are my central process to deal with my own identity (see Figure 5.25).

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ McKenzie, Heidi 'Go East Canadians create in China'. *Ceramic Monthly*. April, 2013, p.46.

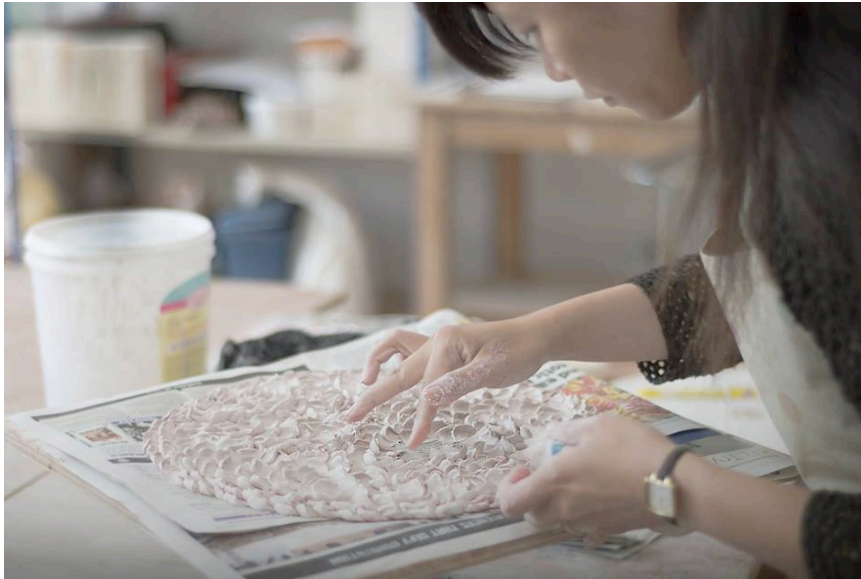


Figure 5.25: I used my fingers to create my fingerprint work.²⁸

Therefore, I used my fingerprint work to discuss my own identity. 'Fingerprints develop in the embryo before a baby is born. A person's fingerprints are formed when they are a tiny developing baby in their mother's womb. Pressure on the fingers from the baby touching and their surroundings create what are called friction ridges.'²⁹ Fingerprints are the memory between ourselves and our mothers. Therefore, our fingerprints have a strong connection with our mothers. Each person's fingerprints are unique, formed by interacting with the environment in their mother's womb.

I used transparent glazing to remove my fingerprints in order to remove the evidence of myself from my ceramic surface. My fingerprints are the way of constructing my simple identity compared to the chaos of life and the notion of identity as complex layers. This represents the feeling of disappearing into the gap in between two cultures. For me, disappearing is a kind of beauty, which means I do not exist in any place. This is a digested process to help me feel better about living in the context of not belonging anywhere, either in Taiwan or Britain.

²⁸ Photograph by Sea Maiden Photography/film. 2015

²⁹ University of California Santa Barbara *UCSB Science Line*, Undated. [Online] Available from: <http://scienceline.ucsb.edu/getkey.php?key=2650> [Accessed 3 June 2016].

My artwork 'The Identity' (Figure 5.26) was selected for the 8th Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennale, Icheon, South Korea. The main theme of GICB 2015 was 'Color; Ceramic Spectrum'³⁰. As part of the Korean Biennale 2015 'a total of 2,629 entries by 1,470 artists from seventy-four countries were received, among which 97 pieces by 93 artists from twenty-eight countries were selected after the preliminary screening.'³¹ My work was displayed from 24 April 2015 to 31 May 2015 in the Icheon World Ceramic Center.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.26: The Identity³²

³⁰ Dutch Culture. Trans Artists 'Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennale: Korean Ceramic Foundation', Undated. [Online]Available from: <http://www.transartists.org/air/gyeonggi-international-ceramic-biennale> [Accessed on 7 June 2016].

³¹ Korean Ceramic Foundation *Cheon Cerapia: Icheon World Ceramic Center (CeraMix Creativity Center)*. Undated. [Online]Available from: https://www.kocef.org/eng/n02_biennale/2015/10_01.asp [Accessed 7 June 2016].

³² The Identity: Porcelain 1260 degrees, Size:32 x 32 x 3 cm. WEN HSI CHEN EU 0694, Copyright@2015 by Korea Ceramic Foundation. [Online]Available: <http://www.wenhsichenceramics.com/the-8th-gyeonggi-international-ceramic-biennale-icheon-south-korea-2015.html> [Accessed 7 June 2016].

My artist statement for this exhibition was:

Identity represents complex layers in relation to social and gender contexts. My homeland, Taiwan, is at the edge of the developed world, and is situated within a colonial and postcolonial status. As a Taiwanese I decided to use rich enamel and gold lustre to emphasize this concept of the edge, to represent my enduring feelings of being an outsider. Using the tips of my thumbs and forefingers I created tiny and careful actions to represent my own small voice. This meditative movement is between pressing and pushing. Each small individual porcelain fingerprint is a reconstruction of my identity. It represents the relationship between me and the dominant Western narrative I find myself in. This exquisite pink circle piece is inspired by the shape of traditional Taiwanese wedding cakes. After the wedding ceremony, the couple will share these cakes with each guest to wish for a happy marriage and to bring good luck to others.

I used my fingers to press and push clay as comforting actions. Those simple actions were a meditative process as an artistic strategy, following my inhalation and exhalation, to balance with my breathing to create my movement, between my breathing and my finger action.

Though the finger action is repeated, each fingerprint is unique because of the nature of pressure, angle and which finger I used. However, with a superficial look, the viewers could hardly notice that my ceramics are not identical repetition. This tension created from people's familiarity with their aesthetic experiences is not something they expected it would be.

I have become aware of Bonnie Kemske's research; on her website she states that 'Her sculptural work aims to engage our body's sense of touch in an intimate experience of "grounded sensuality"'.³³ In Kemske's PhD thesis *Evoking intimacy*:

³³ Kemske, Bonnie. *Artist & writer*, 2016. [Online] Available from: <http://www.bonniekemske.com> [Accessed 12 July 2016].

touch and the thoughtful body in sculptural ceramics,³⁴ she explores the sense of touch and explains that her

...aim in the creation of the sculptural artworks was to more fully engage the body's sense of touch through physical interaction, resulting in an experience that I have referred to as 'grounded sensuality'. This moment of centredness is created by the consonance of heightened physical and emotional self-awareness, an engagement of what I have called 'the thoughtful body'. The intention of this research project was to create this moment of engagement with the artwork through evoking a physical sensual response of emotional safety, security and comfort.³⁵

I agree that clay could comfort emotions, but I am not intending to create my ceramics to comfort other people, my ceramics express the notion of insecurity, non-safe, and 'cannot be visible' to show my emotional feelings. Although my making processes were involved in aspects of the sense of touch, my research was not focused on touch.

The Fingerprints piece does not consist of exact repetition, but the structure of the piece is defined by many similar actions resembling each other. I showed similar works to my viewers in Bath. For me, this work was a failure in front of my viewers because most of them thought I was aiming for repetition, like many other artists.

My individual unique fingerprints ended in the universal repetition context. My work was labeled as a decorative piece by superficial opinion. This label made me think about questions concerning the value of ceramic artists in the real world. It was difficult to avoid using the word 'beautiful' to describe my work. The language of beauty made me uncomfortable. My work did not belong to the functional category but some viewers said my work reminded them of a pizza.

³⁴ Kemske, Bonnie. *Evoking intimacy: touch and the thoughtful body in sculptural ceramics*. Ph.D. thesis, Royal College of Art, 2007.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 8.

My work disappeared in the interpretation of the viewers. It highlighted that people actually do not understand my work because, though we live in the same society, they are living in a different context from me. How can I expect them to understand my work, and its cross-cultural context? The glaze may have hidden the fingerprints, though they still contained my identity. The viewers could not see my identity which gave me a feeling of comfort but also meant that they could not understand the work. Like me, the meaning was both visible and invisible (Figure 5.27).



Figure 5.27: Wen-Hsi Chen. The detail of my work.³⁶

The back part of the piece shows another 'order' to construct the layered identities; I did not want to hide the back part. However, it was challenging to offer an explanation of my intentions to the audience (see Figure 5.28).

³⁶ Wen-Hsi Chen. *8th Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennale*

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.28: Chen.Wen-Hsi. The back of my Identity. ³⁷

After exhibiting my work in Bath and South Korea, I wanted to experience another living in-between situation, and also to gain an artist's perspective of Danish cultural identity. I researched the Guldagergaard International Ceramic Research Center, in Denmark³⁸ and I found that some famous ceramic artists had worked there. I thought it would be a good opportunity to experience another culture, especially because I cannot speak Danish. I applied and was successful. Also 'Danish culture' has been labelled the 'happiest' in the world^{39,40}. I wanted to experience 'happiest'.

The Guldagergaard webpage describes: "The artist-in-residence program at Guldagergaard combines an international atmosphere and wide professional

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Guldagergaard International Ceramic Research Center, Undated. [Online] Available from: <https://ceramic.dk> [Accessed 11 February 2017].

³⁹ VisitDenmark *Happiest people in the world*, Undated [Online] Available from: <http://www.visitdenmark.co.uk/en-gb/denmark/art/happiest-people-world> [Accessed on 22 November 2016].

⁴⁰ Sandhu, Serina 'Denmark ranked happiest country in the world for the third time- how did your country do? The Uk ranked at number 23 on the list of 156 countries'. *Independent*. 16 March 2016. [Online] Available from: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/denmark-happiest-country-for-third-time-united-nations-report-a6934196.html> [Accessed on 22 November 2016].

dialogue within a concentrated work period, with the exchange of knowledge and research into materials, techniques and ideas.’⁴¹

I wondered what was meant by ‘international atmosphere’ and how ‘professional dialogue’ could happen. I undertook my first artist residency in Denmark for one month (July-August 2015⁴²). Figure 5.29 shows my studio space in Denmark. During this residency I created eight pieces for a ceramic festival in Skælskør. Although the experience deepened my understanding of what it means to be living in-between – ‘fitting in’ with the already-established group of artists in Guldagergaard – the creative outputs from the residency do not form part of my PhD. For more details about my experiences during the residency see Appendix 8.



Figure 5.29: Wen-Hsi Chen’s studio space in Denmark.⁴³

⁴¹ Guldagergaard International Ceramic Research Center, Denmark. *Artist in residence*, Undated [Online] <http://ceramic.dk/artist-in-residence/> [Accessed 20 November 2016]

⁴² Thank you to Bath Spa University school of Art and Design, for supporting me with £300 as my research fees as a PhD student.

⁴³ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

5.3.3 Critical reflection

When the 8 Hours piece is displayed, there is a shadow crossing the tube and the circular ceramic shape. This creates a dialogue between the real object and artistic process through the shadows. The shadow will disappear if there is no light. I am like a shadow, and will always be disappearing in the world. I do not belong to Britain or Taiwan. I am living in an invisible gap. People cannot see me, cannot feel I am a real person as my 'self' became invisible, so this is my personal identity in Britain.

Furthermore, another layer of the conversation also exists in between the different materials: clay and plastic (see Figure 5.30). The clay experiences high temperatures (1260 degrees), but the plastic is cold and smelt unpleasantly when I cut those tubes in the plastic workshop. The clay is a natural material in comparison with plastic material.



Figure 5.30: Chen, Wen-Hsi, 8 Hours.⁴⁴

In this project, I tried to make a connection between my original ideas and my personal situation (see Figure 5.31). I learnt how to cut the plastic tubes by hand. Also, I had to trust the drilling of a big hole to support two fragile materials joining together. My work does not look very secure in the gallery space which seems

⁴⁴ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

parallel to my own situation living in-between. I have chosen to create an installation that looks vulnerable and uncertain (see Figure 5.32).

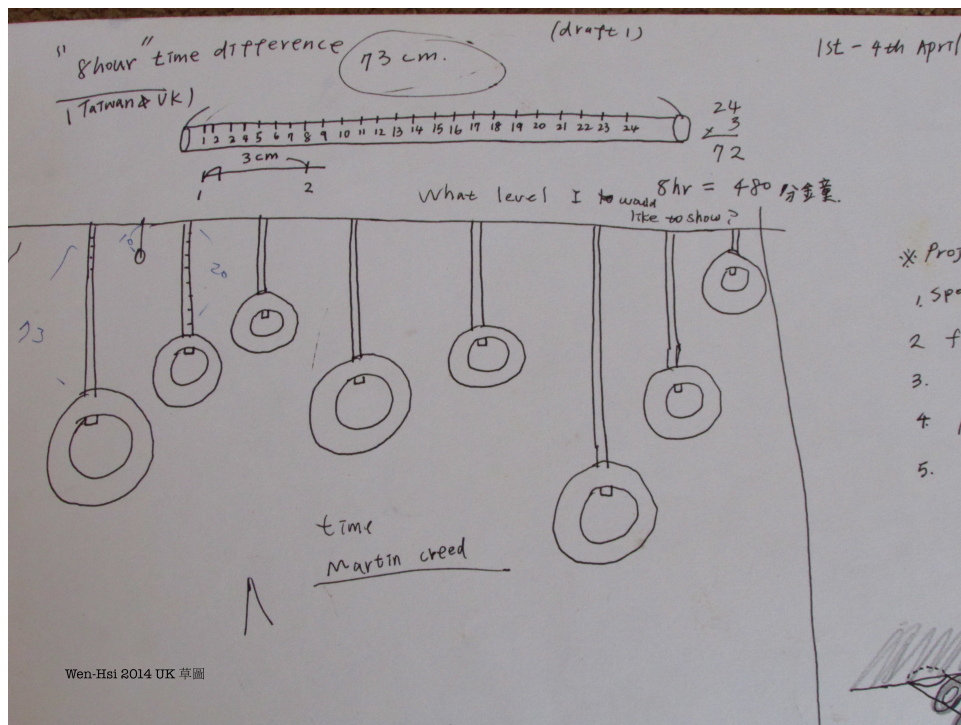


Figure 5.31: My sketch for 8 Hours.⁴⁵

Living in-between is necessarily to face being emotionally vulnerable. I wanted to highlight the 'gap' and allow others to understand it better. In fact, I cannot measure how this situation affects my life. For me eight hours is a surreal time gap, it seems like it does not exist in the space because it is too abstract to describe and analyse. As a non-Western artist living in the West, I feel my work does not fit into the Western concept. The shadows probably are the most real response to my circumstance. If there is no lighting, the shadows will disappear and will not exist in the space. The gap is a place to allow me to escape from reality and tensions. This time-gap is a space belonging to myself. It is a space where there will not be misunderstanding, stereotyping, judgement or history, it is just a space which belongs to the artist to explore and investigate.

⁴⁵ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

For the Fingerprint piece, I decided to insert two plastic tubes into two holes in the wall. I then arranged the work to tilt 75 degrees means 5:00 am in the morning. Five o'clock in the morning is a good time to wake up.⁴⁶ In the field of chronoacupuncture 5.00am is a time when yang energy begins to prosper.⁴⁷ It is a time when the movement of the sun reflects human beings' movement and the Amis follow the movement of the sun to give the rhythm of their daily life. (Figure 5.33).

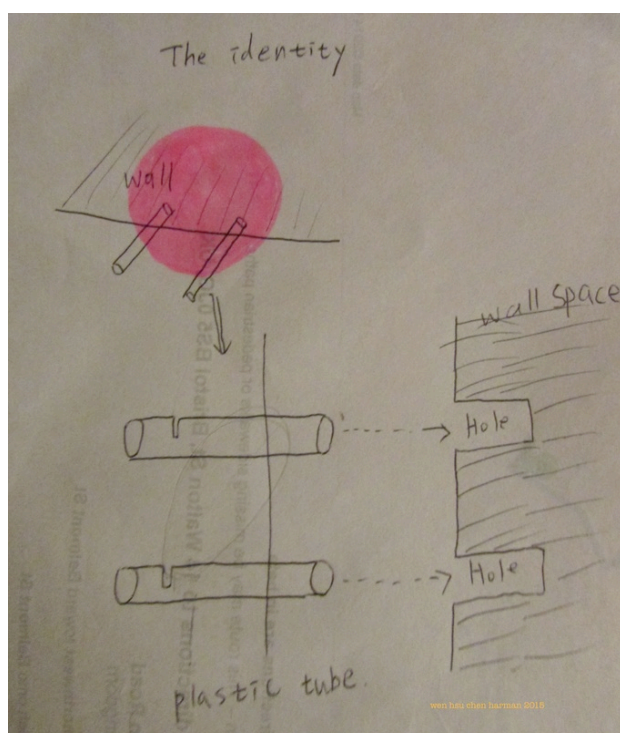


Figure 5.32: My drawing about how to display my work. ⁴⁸

⁴⁶ KylePott 'How to start your day at 5:00 am'. *Life hack*, Undated. [Online] Available: <http://www.lifehack.org/articles/featured/productivity-boost-how-to-start-your-day-at-500-am.html> [Accessed 28 November 2016].

⁴⁷ Chronoacupuncture *The 12 earthly branches*, 2016. [Online] Available from: <http://chronoacupuncture.com/branches.php> [Accessed 28 November 2016].

⁴⁸ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

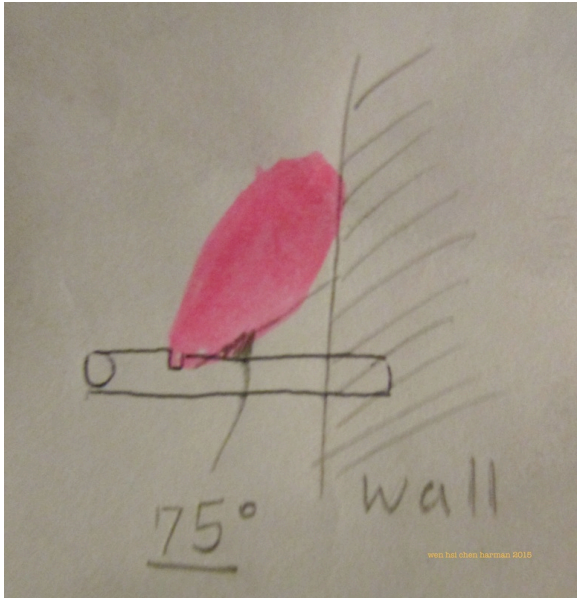


Figure 5.33: My work displayed at 75° angles.⁴⁹

My work looks very unbalanced, dangerous in an unsettling way. However, for me it was a suitable way to reflect on the reality of living in-between. I am aware that the way I displayed the piece made it look like a Chinese plate. The fact that this was obviously to do with tradition forms a response to what I see as the traditional Asian ceramic culture. My work suggests levels of 'traditional' concepts in the East. Even if I am an outsider and I do not have any 'roots' in Taiwanese ceramics, because I acquired most of my ceramic education and skills in Britain, I still hope that my work can allow people to touch something deep down about Asian traditional ceramic culture. Sometimes, I do feel Asian ceramics are living in-between modern and tradition, and it is not easy to get rid of aesthetic values of traditional form, such as plates, vessels and so on. Therefore, I used unfamiliar material: plastic (light and modern) in comparison with ceramics (heavy and rich). The two plastic tubes perfectly held my porcelain work during the exhibition (Figure 5.34).

⁴⁹ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.34: My work displayed in the exhibition in Korea. ⁵⁰

Next, Section 5.4 will explore ‘Can I use Taiwanese bananas as a symbol to convey aspects of my cultural identity?’.

⁵⁰ Photograph by GICB2015 office Korea Ceramic Foundation.

5.4 Can I use Taiwanese bananas as a symbol to convey aspects of my cultural identity?

5.4.1 Introduction to the final work: Bananas



Figure 5.35: Wen-Hsi Chen. East Meets West Bananas.¹

The theme of bananas has particular significance in Taiwanese history. The Taiwanese banana, once the King of Fruits in Taiwan from the 1930s to the 1960s, is smaller than Caribbean bananas, also more chewy and sweet. Taiwanese bananas remained important in international economic trade in other countries. However, nowadays, the values have changed.²

¹ Size: 31 x 16 x 11 cm, Enamels, Luster, Mould making, Earthenware, Wall piece, 2016. Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

² Shu, Catherine 'Taiwan tries to revive its banana export industry'. *The New York Times*. 13 September 2013. [Online] Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/14/business/global/taiwan-seeks-to-revive-its-banana-industry.html> [Accessed 11 February 2017].

For me, the banana peel's colour represents the way my skin is viewed as 'yellow' in the stereotype of Asian people's skin. This emotional response comes from someone calling me 'yellow' when I arrived in the UK.

The audience response to my bananas has been very varied not least because the fruit carries different connotations in different countries. In 2014, bananas and sunflowers were an icon for Taiwanese 'democracy'. My ceramic bananas project started from the Sunflower Movement in Taiwan in 2014. Garnaut states that:

It was only in March, when [students] occupied Taiwan's legislative Yuan for 24 days and filled it with sunflowers, and drew 500,000 people onto the streets in solidarity, that Su and other student leaders came to believe that they could change the course of Taiwan history.³

In this photo, students can be seen sitting down on the ground surrounded by policemen (Figure 5.36).

³ Garnaut, John 'Young people of Taiwan and Hong Kong refusing to accept the unification of "Great China"'. *The Canberra Times in Australia*, 11 October 2014. [Online] Available from: <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/comment/young-people-of-taiwan-and-hong-kong-refusing-to-accept-the-unification-of-greater-china-20141010-1147tq.html> [Accessed 29 November 2016].

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.36: Sunflower Movement.⁴

Ho explains that:

Student protesters were able to seize the national legislature because of an internal split within the ruling party and support from the opposition party. However, the failure to further exploit these favorable opportunities exposed the movement to government repression.⁵

I also found on Facebook that some of my friends in Taiwan had gone out and sat or lay down on the ground near the central government. I started to look at the news online until I found the policemen had used their legs to 'kick' students and forced them leave the space. In Taiwan, people questioned whether these were real policemen as they did not have official badges on their uniforms (see Figure 5.37). Also, people questioned whether these 'policemen' were using a suitable way to move the students (see Figure 5.38).

⁴ Sunflower movement, Undated. [Facebook] Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/sunflowermovement/> [Accessed 29 November 2016].

⁵ Ho, Ming-Sho 'Occupy congress in Taiwan: Political opportunity, threat, and the Sunflower Movement'. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 15, 2015, pp. 69-97, p. 69.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.37: The 'policemen' kicking students.⁶

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.38: The policemen tried to move out students during the Sunflower Movement.⁷

⁶ The photograph comes from Ayo News 318 太陽花學運 (佔領立法院，反服貿抗爭), 4 December 2014. [Online] Available from: <http://myweb.nutn.edu.tw/~hycheng/1today/ayoNews2014Mar18act.html> [Accessed 3 January 2016].

⁷ *Ibid.*

The students did not choose the sunflower as their symbol. It was a Taiwanese florist: CIAO Flower Design ⁸ who saw the news from Facebook. He decided to provide 250 sunflowers to support them, although, in the beginning, he would have liked to support them with lilies. Lilies were related to the '野百合學運 Wild Lily student movement'⁹ when students were fighting for democracy in Taiwan in 1990. However, all the lily flowers were not available, so in the end he chose the sunflowers. He said: '向日葵強韌屹立的心，來面對這個社會所面臨的問題。Sunflowers represent the heart needing to survive in tough conditions, to face the problems facing society.'¹⁰ So in the end, the students used the sunflower as a symbol for this event (see Figure 5.39).

The students have their own Facebook page: The Sunflower Movement (aka Occupy Parliament) 'an ongoing student and civil protest in Taiwan, aiming to raise public political awareness'¹¹ and I am touched by their spirit.

⁸ CIAO Flower Design. Taiwan [Facebook] Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/ciaoflowerdesign/?pnref=lhc> [Accessed 1 December 2016].

⁹ More information can be read in this book: Benton, Gregor and Alan Hunter *eds.* *Wild Lily, Prairie Fire: China's Road to Democracy, Yan'an to Tian'anmen 1942-1989*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.

¹⁰ Lv, Dongxi '「太陽花學運」名稱怎麼來的？ [Where does the] "Sunflower movement" name come from?'. *Newtalks.tw*. 10 April 2014 [Online] Available from: <http://newtalk.tw/opinion/view/20584> [Accessed 1 December 2016].

¹¹ Sunflower movement

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.39: Sunflowers in the Sunflower Movement. ¹²

Yi Qiu worked for the Taiwanese legislature department; he made a mistake. When he looked at the sunflowers from a long distance, he thought the yellow colour was bananas (see Figure 5.40). He also mentioned on a Taiwanese TV show that the Democratic Progressive Party (green party, means they regard Taiwan as an independent country) were supporting the students (see Figure 5.41).

¹² This photograph comes from the Sunflower movement Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/sunflowermovement/> .

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.40: Yi Qiu made a mistake that the sunflowers were Taiwanese bananas.¹³

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.41: On a TV show, Yi Qiu said the Democratic Progressive Party (green party) were supporting the students.¹⁴

I felt very disappointed that the Taiwanese legislature member, did not investigate the evidence before releasing the news on the media. This scandal exposed the 'funny and sensitive' nature of the Taiwanese government's relationship with the

¹³ NTDTV.COM *Humor and farce in sunflower movement*, 2014. [Online] Available from: <http://www.ntdtv.com/xtr/b5/2014/04/10/a1099412.html> [Accessed 29 November 2016].

¹⁴ YouTube 邱毅強力譴責民進黨送香蕉助學運!!!, 2014. [Online] Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aen8577gnVo&app=desktop> [Accessed 29 November 2016].

Taiwanese. This Sunflower Movement also showed how the Chinese government control Taiwan, between colonial and post-colonial tension. I am aware that little news was exposed in the Western media, because it seems most authorities were afraid to offend the Chinese government. In 2014, bananas and sunflowers were an icon for Taiwanese 'democracy'. Some of my Taiwanese friends prefer that Taiwan should sign deals with China, because they could make business easy. Sui explains that:

Though many deals have been signed with China in recent years, including some widely considered beneficial to Taiwan, would-be agreements are now on hold indefinitely. This is causing concern from not only businesses such as banks that need greater access to China's market, but others who also believe it's crucial for the small island of Taiwan to have stronger ties with China, especially economic ones.¹⁵

The leader of the Sunflower Movement, Fei-Fan Lin, said that 'If recognition of Taiwan's identity can be protected, then that will further Taiwan's self-rule. This is very important to us.'¹⁶ This was my worry, I am never very proud of being a Taiwanese, but I have realized I am not Chinese, especially when I am living in Britain. I put myself in a very uncomfortable position, due to the fact that I do not fully believe I am Chinese. I decided to partially express this view in my ceramics to protect Taiwanese identity. Therefore, I decided to take advantage of using fruit bananas to create the quality of blurring, playful, funny elements. Some Taiwanese people have created some funny photographs to respond to the Sunflower Movement (see Figures 5.42 and 5.43).

¹⁵ Sui, Cindy. *Will the Sunflower Movement change Taiwan?* BBC News Taipei, 2015. [Online] Available from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-32157210> [Accessed 5 December 2016].

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.42: The combination between Taiwanese bananas and sunflowers.¹⁷

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.43: A Taiwanese fruit shop started to call bananas sunflowers.¹⁸

¹⁷ kuso *Sunflower Movement.htm*. TAIWANCON, 2014. [Online] Available from: <http://www.taiwancon.com/123330/> [Accessed 1 December 2016].

5.4.2 Development of the work

In the beginning of my development, I looked at the history of Taiwanese bananas; it was once the King of Fruits in Taiwan from the 1930s to the 1960s.

Yoshiyuki explains that:

Taiwan accounts for a small percentage of world banana production and trade, it has maintained a close tie with the Japanese market. Taiwan's banana industry developed during the period of Japanese occupation, and Taiwan bananas monopolized the Japanese market until 1963 when banana importation was liberalized.¹⁹

Taiwanese bananas also have a strong relationship during the Japanese occupation (see Figure 5.44). Yoshiyuki explains that Taiwanese bananas:

were exported to the ports in Japan as well as those under Japanese occupation such as Pusan, Inchon, Seoul, Pyongyang, Sinuiju and Anton in Korea, Dalian, Shenyang and Harbin in Manchuria, Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Nanjing, Fuzhiou and Xiamen in R.O.C, and even Hong Kong.²⁰

¹⁸ NTDTV.COM *Taiwanese student movement is more and more nervous from Chinese government perspective*, 2014. [Online] Available from: <http://www.ntdtv.com/xtr/b5/2014/03/27/a1090104.html> [Accessed 1 December 2016].

¹⁹ Yoshiyuki, Koseki 'Taiwan's banana-producing regions and the Japanese market'. *Geographical Review of Japan*, 79 (5), 2016, pp. 216-236, p.216.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 219.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.44: Packing of bananas, Formosa. 1930. ²¹

Yang explains that 'in Taiwan during the first half of this century, bananas were considered a symbol of agricultural growth and fertility; Taiwan itself was dubbed a Banana Paradise.'²² The Taiwanese female artist Yu Jui Cho used bananas as her oil painting subject to respond her life in 1975. Yang explains that 'Cho, Yu Jui's home district of Pingtung produces in particular abundance and with which she was confronted every day when she grew up.'²³ Cho mentioned that I 'saw bananas as a symbol of life, from the purple-red fruits ripening between the green leaves through the emergence of the fully developed banana bunch to its being peeled and consumed and finally being buried under a curtain.'²⁴ (See Figure 5.45).

²¹ National Central Library in Taiwan *Taiwan memories*, 2004. [Online] Available from: http://memory.ncl.edu.tw/tm_cgi/hypage.cgi?HYPAGE=image_photo_detail.hpg&project_id=tpphoto&dtd_id=10&xml_id=0000362715&subject_name=台北市老照片 (Accessed 6 December 2016).

²² Yang, Wen-I 'A banana is not a banana' In Dysart, Dinah and Hannah Fink eds. *Asian Women Artists*. Sydney: Craftsman House, 1996, p. 42.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 45.

²⁴ Cho, Yu-Jui 'The new realistic painter depicting thoughts'. *Artist Magazine*. December 1975, pp. 98-103.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.45: 卓有瑞 Yu-Jui Cho. Banana series: 7, 1975.²⁵

Another Taiwanese female oil painter, Ming-Huy Yan²⁶, in her work: This is Art. (see Figure 5.46) used very explicit ways to symbolize the male sexual organ with the banana fruit. Lu explains that:

During the early 1990s Yan Ming-Huy used fruits metaphorically as sexual organs in a series of paintings...Yan Ming-Huy stood up to fight for an expansion in feminist understanding, creating paintings, drawings and writing scripts which agitated for a female self- consciousness and self-encouragement. The pressure to do so came from the very conservative climate in Taiwanese society which had imperceptibly generated visible scars in her life.²⁷

²⁵ Oil painting Size: 181.5 x 224.5 cm. Taiwanese Academy. Ministry of Culture Republic of China (Taiwan) [Online] Available from: http://zh-tw.taiwanacademy.tw/toolkit/index.php?option=com_arts&view=work&id=153&Itemid=349 [Accessed 11 December 2016].

²⁶ Yan, Ming-Huy *Dimension Endowment of Art in Taiwan*. 財團法人中華民國帝門藝術教育基金會 The Database about Art. Undated [Online] Available from: http://www.deoa.org.tw/artist_info.php?art_no=238 [Accessed 11 December 2016].

²⁷ Lu, Victoria 'The rise of feminist awareness and the feminist art movement in Taiwan'. *n.paradoxa*, online issue 15 and 16, July/Sept 2001 and July 2002, pp.36-

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.46: Ming-Huy Yan 嚴明惠 This is Art. ²⁸

I liked the Taiwanese female artist Yi-Chun Lo, who used banana peels to create her installation, she explains that

I have been interested in bananas since I participated in an artist residency in Japan in early 2013. At that time, I was lonely, and confused about the cultural similarity of Taiwan and Japan and the identity of being Taiwanese. I was amazed when I saw Taiwanese bananas nicely displayed in Japanese supermarkets, and I found that during the 1950s to the 1970s, the majority of bananas in Japan were imported from Taiwan. Therefore, I started researching the banana trade history and got interested in international trade issues.²⁹

45, p. 38. [Online] Available from: http://www.ktpress.co.uk/pdf/nparadoxaissue15and16_Victoria-Lu_36-45.pdf [Accessed 8 December 2016].

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 38.

²⁹ Allen, Jane Ingram 'Taiwanese artist Yi-Chun Lo talks bananas and economics – interview: Taiwanese artist uses banana peels to engage with issues as diverse as globalisation, capitalism and dictatorship'. *Art Radar*, 2014.[Online] Available from: <http://artradarjournal.com/2014/12/05/taiwanese-artist-yi-chun-lo-talks-bananas-and-economics-interview/> [Accessed 11 February 2017].

Lo's website mentions that:

This work takes on the themes of advocacy and justice and with a global concern. The exhibit consists of 3 large painting installations, all made with banana peels which she collected from various sources, including the local ice cream shop (Reasons To Be Cheerful in Concord), supermarkets and fundraising events.³⁰ (Figure 5.61)

Lo, explains that:

I love banana, feel at home with banana...recently when I learned that banana has been devastated by the Panama virus disease and people haven't yet found a cure for the disease, I made it my mission to explore the subject of banana, one of the most nutritious food people consume daily, its trade and its impact to the environment; through which I hope the project will evoke people's conscientious attention to the global trade and humanity...³¹

³⁰ Lo, Yi-Chun Website. [Online] Available from: <http://yichunlo.wixsite.com/artist/banana-justice-> [Accessed 20 August 2014].

³¹ *Ibid.*

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.47: Yi-Chun Lo,. Banana Justice. 2014, Banana peels.³²

Taiwanese bananas have been used to reflect different periods of Taiwanese society. From the 1970s use focused on the realistic painter reflecting their life. In the 1990s it became a subject for women's awareness. More recently bananas have been used as a topic to explain international trade and justice. I wondered how I could deal with my banana project. I made a decision that my ceramic bananas would not deal with any conscious image about the sexual organ; my banana is about how my personal challenge reflects my country's position living in-between Asia and the West, so I made a banana mould (Figure 5.48). Also, I made two half-banana moulds. I used earthenware slip and made a couple of the bananas (See Figure 5.49).

³² *Ibid.*



Figure 5.48: Wen-Hsi Chen's banana mould. ³³

I wanted to show the real situation about my homeland Taiwan: as a gift to the Japanese government or the Chinese government, being occupied by different powers. Therefore, I presented my hand-painted bananas in a box, which came from Taiwan. One of my friends delivered a famous Taiwanese gift, pineapple cake, to Britain as my birthday present (Figure 5.49).

I made individual white earthenware bananas, which, with the traditional Chinese characters: Taiwanese bananas, Taiwanese, Taiwan, implied a political message to respond to the Sunflower Movement. It seems, Taiwan cannot have freedom because it always needs to look at the Chinese government and Western society. Taiwanese bananas used to be a luxury gift shipping to Japan during the 1930s-1960s. However, this context has changed, Taiwanese bananas have lost their value. It also reminded me that I have experienced a gift-giving culture when I was

³³ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

in Taiwan. If I visited my friends, I definitely needed to prepare a gift as respect. If people do not prepare a gift, people will say: that person carries a bunch of 'bananas', it means ten fingers look like a bunch of bananas.



Figure 5.49: Wen-Hsi Chen, Taiwanese bananas 2014.³⁴

Afterwards, I created a couple of the individual earthenware white bananas, not yellow. In Taiwan, I was taught that to have a 'white skin' was a thing of beauty for Taiwanese women. I have received a social ritual, used an umbrella and wore a hat or used sun cream. My grandmother guided me, and used some products to help my skin become white in Taiwan. Having 'white skin' is a central idea for some Taiwanese women.

I used a volcanic glaze on the surface of the piece to mirror the geological instability on Taiwan, with its nine volcanoes and regular earthquakes (as a little girl I often had to practice earthquake evacuations). During firing at different temperatures, the layers also began to react to create lava-like bubbles in the glaze. For me, the volcanic glaze is a skin of the ceramics. The varieties of glazes were responding to my expression. I used the volcanic glaze to glue the gap between each banana.

³⁴ Size:15 x 24 x 7 cm. Earthenware, Luster. Photograph by Christina Freeth.

As well as contending with volcanoes and earthquakes, I also had to practice 'air defense exercises', a result of Taiwan's colonial past. I wondered about where the 'real' paradise is, with no earthquakes, no war or conflicts. Therefore, in real life, no white banana peel, also no real 'white' people. I cast the baby doll's fingers to put on the top of my ceramic bananas, and used my fingers to hold my piece, to highlight myself struggling to survive in-between (Figure 5.50).



Figure 5.50: Wen-Hsi Chen. The white bananas.³⁵

I also continued to express my conflicting emotions on the top of my ceramic bananas; I started to hand-paint the traditional Chinese character 忍, which means 'endure'. Also, I decided to use the colour yellow to express the anger, when local people called me 'yellow' (Figure 5.51).

³⁵ The white bananas. 2014. Size: 13x15x 6 cm. Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.



Figure 5.51: Wen-Hsi Chen. We all have our crosses to bear.³⁶

I held a solo exhibition 'identity: story of the object' from 10 November to 8 December 2015³⁷ in Bath Spa University Sion Hill library. Also, I liked to see how other people thought about my bananas project so I used an ipad-based questionnaire in the library to collect audience responses.

On the first day of my exhibition, my work suffered from an accident (see Figure 5.52). I decided to not explain anything, just post a photograph on my artistic Facebook page.

³⁶ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi. Turquoise Lustre. 2014.

³⁷ Harman, Wen-Hsi *Solo exhibition, identity: story of the object*, 2015. [Online] Available from: <http://www.wenhsichenceramics.com/identity-story-of-the-object.html> [Accessed 9 February 2017].



Figure 5.52: My Taiwanese bananas in Bath Spa University library.³⁸

One person said: 'I think you are very cool creating a broken piece.'³⁹ Social media created a 'fast and cool' quality as most of my British friends did not know anything about the Sunflower Movement. I have realized 'the truth' is not necessary, because the truth is always hurting people. Most people don't like to listen to negative issues, such as the Sunflower Movement or Taiwanese cultural identity.

My ceramic bananas were living my 'dark side'. 'Broken' was a good reflection of my inner feelings and times of frustration and hardship. I am very aware that I should be careful in my PhD writing, what kind of truth I should say, especially regarding the Chinese government and Taiwanese political issues. I decided to take a risk to speak because I am 'sick' of the post-colonial powers, existing in a life of no value. Some local people laugh at my accent and skin colour, I always choose to keep silent. However, those uncomfortable emotional times happen a lot.

³⁸ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

³⁹ Harman, Wen-Hsi Undated.[Facebook] Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/WenHsiHarmanceramics.7/photos/a.302929533238065.1073741841.292492650948420/428742763990074/?type=3&theater> [Accessed 9 February 2017].

My Taiwanese bananas (Figure 5.53) showed in Hamburg, Germany.⁴⁰ I spent four days talking to the viewers. I was surprised that local German people made a strong connection with their history before the fall of the Berlin Wall, how in East Germany bananas were a luxury fruit or even could not be bought.

Also, some viewers could speak Chinese; they were very knowledgeable about the sensitive relationship between Taiwan and China.



Figure 5.53: Wen-Hsi Chen. Taiwanese bananas.⁴¹

These political conversations made me feel very excited about how my Taiwanese bananas were connected with people in Germany because I had shown the same work in New Designers⁴² in 2015 in London and did not have any deeper conversations. However, I present my paper: 'Ceramic bananas – Looking at Taiwanese cultural identity' in the Early Stage Researcher Conference: Ethics 2016 at Bath. I had more discussion around people's memories about bananas; these responses were very personal. I am aware that my ceramic bananas may not

⁴⁰ Harman, Wen-Hsi *P/ART (Producers art fair) Hamburg. Germany, 24-27 September 2015*, 2015. [Online] Available from: <http://producersartfair.com/en/artists/2015/wen-hsi-harman/> [Accessed 8 February 2017].

⁴¹ *Ibid.* This photograph is by photographer Katrin Kamrau.

⁴² New Designers, London, Undated. [Online] Available from: <http://www.newdesigners.com/welcome> [Accessed 8 February 2017].

engage with viewers because a couple of the viewers mentioned that my work was too weird, unusual, and that doll's fingers made them too uncomfortable. I thought these responses were very closed to my feelings about living in-between.

5.4.3 Critical reflection



Figure 5.54: The Taiwanese bananas with my 'East meets West Bananas'.⁴³

I used to use the Caribbean banana moulds, which I created in Britain, and then I named them: Taiwanese bananas, as the title. It did not represent the truth of the knowledge of real bananas. During my Taiwanese artist-residency in Taiwan in 2015, I cast two Taiwanese banana plaster moulds and brought them back to Britain. In this piece (Figure 5.54) I have four full-sized Taiwanese bananas with two half-sized Taiwanese bananas and one half-sized banana from Costa Rica = five and a half bananas. They made a composition with five fingers. I also put the label 'fyffes Costa Rica' on one of the half-sized Taiwanese bananas. The label implied where the bananas are originally from, the location of identity. My ceramic bananas were multi-fired, from biscuit firing, glazing firing, enamels firing, and luster firing. Through each firing more layers were added; for me, these processes were addressing the complexity of identity.

⁴³ My ceramic Bananas size: 31 x 16 x 11 cm, Enamels, Luster, Mould making, Earthenware, Wall piece, 2016. Photograph by Wen-Hsi Chen.

I realized it was unlikely that many British people would associate bananas with Taiwan. I showed this series in London at the New Designers exhibition in 2015. During the private view, one lady stopped in front of my work, and immediately commented that she understood what I was saying through my ceramic work. She said she came from the Caribbean and her mother's job was to grow bananas; my work reminded her of childhood memories. However, another viewer's response surprised me. He asked whether my work had sexual connotations. As explained above, when my work showed in Hamburg, Germany, visitors pointed out that it reminded them of the difference between East and West Germany before reunification. It was another cultural layer of the 'East' and 'West'.

Therefore, I named my ceramic bananas as 'East meets West Bananas', because finally I do not need to deceive my viewers. I made a mistake, I played with 'the truth' of my ceramic bananas, I wondered how to show the truth of living in-between; the only way I thought was expressing my emotional feeling through glazing and firing. For me, glazing is the skin of my ceramics, I used glazing to cover and comfort my clay body. For me, I made my own glazing as I enjoyed doing all the processes by myself. I also enjoy reading chemical language and doing tests.

I prefer if my work does not occupy a lot of space. My eye level position setting might be always lower than the Western audience, as I am not very tall. Some Western viewers might feel a little bit uncomfortable. However, the setting was similar to the position of my homeland: Taiwan, that does not have enough voices and feels 'lower' in the world. I combined these challenges put into my small sculptural wall piece. This is my way to use small individual items to construct the form. For me, the Taiwanese bananas combine to my emotional and complex layers of myself as the outsider living in the UK. It is also my way to negotiate my cultural identity as a visual language to communicate with the viewers. In the next section, I will explore my artist-residency in Taiwan.

5.5 Artist-residency in Taiwan

5.5.1 Introduction to the final work: Traditional Chinese Characters

I created my installation: The Language of Ceramics during my artist-residency in New Taipei Yingge Museum in Taiwan in 2016 (Figure 5. 55).



Figure 5.55: The Language of Ceramics. ¹

During my artist- residency in Taiwan from 3 February to 3 March 2016, I met other residency artists from Canada, the USA, Spain and Britain. They could not speak Taiwanese or Chinese so we had a bilingual (Chinese and English) studio induction day. However, after that they wanted me to confirm how to use the kilns (this is a complex process because the climate in Taiwan is damp so the kilns have to be programmed differently to what the other artists were used to).

Unfortunately, the residency technical staff just spoke simple English so I became a kind of ‘translation machine’ during my residency. I have realized people from the USA use different language for chemical composition; it is different from British terms.

¹ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

Also, it was different from Taiwan. In Taiwan, glazing naming is very 'romantic or poetic'. However, this was very challenging for the artists from Western society in this residency. I came from a Chinese literature background, and I was aware of the depth of philosophical terms to describe what kind of glazing I was looking for. However, it was challenging to translate these cultural meanings or nearly abstract atmosphere to the other artists. I thought this is why some Taiwanese artists have their own 'secret recipe' for glazing. The glazing helps artists transform their inner feelings surrounding their life; it is precious.

I found this translation very challenging because it was not just about translating language, it was also about translating culture. In other artists' minds they already had certain stereotypical conceptions about Taiwanese culture because they had experienced some Western version of Chinese cultures.

When I arrived in Britain, I started to look at how Chinese characters and symbols are used in popular culture and fashion in the UK. From my observations of the British fashion brand Superdry (see Figure 5.56), the Chinese symbols did not make any sense. However, it is a very popular brand in the UK. I also observed people with tattoos in the street, and I wondered if the people understood the meaning behind the symbols. For ethical reasons, I could not take photographs of them but I have found similar tattoos on the internet (see Figure 5.57). David Beckham also has a very distinctive tattoo which does seem to have a relevance when translated but would be incomprehensible to most Westerners (see Figure 5.58). However, tattoos do often have very personal meanings and are not necessarily understood by general onlookers. The use of Chinese characters gave me inspiration for a new direction.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.56: Superdry vintage logo hibiscus cut out T-shirt.²

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.57: What are you up to these days? Oh, being a meanie crime poet.³

² Superdry *Vintage logo hibiscus cut out T-shirt* Undated. [Online] Available from: <http://www.superdry.com/womens/new-in/details/62550/vintage-logo-hibiscus-cut-out-t-shirt> [Accessed 9 August 2016].

³ Buzz Feed *Ridiculous Chinese character tattoos translated*, posted on Aug 3, 2013. [Online] Available from: <https://www.buzzfeed.com/ellievhall/ridiculous-chinese->

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.58: The Chinese symbols, which were etched on in Hong Kong, translate to 'Death and life have determined appointments. Riches and honour depend upon heaven'.⁴

Comparing these tattoos, I read the meaning behind the Chinese characters. The Chinese artist: Xu Bing 徐冰⁵, showed his installation work: Book from Sky⁶, in the Blanton Museum of Art. He combined different Chinese characters and re-arranged the structure. He spent four years carving 4000 'Chinese' lost-meaning characters,

[character-tattoos-translated?utm_term=.dfNYIEWp1V#.llWBByZMYo](#) [Accessed 9 August 2016].

⁴ Sisson, Melanie, 'He's inked it all over. We run down David Beckham's 34 tatoos'. *The Sun* 18 September 2013 [Online] Available from: <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/features/5106640/david-beckhams-34-tattoos.html> [Accessed 5 June 2016].

⁵ Xu Bing, Undated. [Online] Available from: <http://www.xubing.com/index.php> [Accessed 14 February 2016].

⁶ Xu Bing *Book from the Sky. June 19 2016 to January 22 2017. The Blanton Museum of Art*, Undated. [Online] Available from: <https://blantonmuseum.org/2016/06/xu-bing-book-from-the-sky/> [Accessed 14 February 2016].

even if he could not read some words, and also printed them out (Figure 5.59). He attempted to subvert the traditional Chinese characters and bring a challenge to the viewers; 'readability' became a mission. I appreciated his process to produce the 'real fake' characters, also printing it out in the traditional Chinese book form. It seems readable but actually it is difficult to read these 'books'.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 5.59: Xu Bing. Book from Sky. Print version and wood carved version.⁷

Nakatani states that Xu Bing's Book from Sky, 'is what enables us to conceive a history of the graphic regime. In the optic of this privileged perspective, the history will figure as a history of blind-nesses, a history of a regime that persisted in misrecognizing itself as the world'⁸ For me, the misrecognizing is the interesting concept of knowledge of Chinese characters, so I decided to play a language game, creating 'Fuck You' (See Figure 5.60), a handmade 'flat' porcelain work. I used the rudest symbol to express my emotional feelings, and challenge the non-Asian viewers.

These characters in Taiwan are also swear words or 'bad' words. However, it does not look angry unless people know the meaning. Sometimes, two different

⁷ Xu Bing *Book from Sky. Indulge Esthetics. Taiwan*. Undated. [Online] Available from: <http://kaiak.tw/無人能懂的一本書-徐冰 xu-bing 《天書》 -2/> [Accessed 14 February 2017].

⁸ Nakatani, Hajime. 'Imperious griffonage: Xu Bing and the graphic regime'. *Art Journal*, 68 (3), 2009, pp.6-29, p. 29.

languages (for example Taiwanese and English) located in different settings can lead to cultural misunderstanding; it can also lead to most beautiful mistakes. The rudest of Chinese characters could not mean anything in British culture. These cultural exchange processes are very ambiguous and complicated. Most Western people who viewed this piece responded to it as a piece of visual art. Some people mentioned that it was very decorative and tactile. However, my work has two layers: the visual art layer and the cultural message. For me this work has been successful as a way of constructing my identity through the making process where I have used my fingerprints and it also responds to my research.

Most Western people cannot read the cultural message from my work, because they cannot understand traditional Chinese characters. It seems the setting created a game which I invited the viewers to play. For me, it was a very interesting process to see how people responded and realized the meanings after I told them. Most viewers were laughing and said 'Vicky, you are very nasty' but in a very good way.

In a way, I was in a superior position to the viewers because I knew what the characters meant. I could see the viewers responding to the beauty of the Chinese characters but I knew that their meaning was ugly. It reminded me of the colonial and ongoing post-colonial powers. Who holds the power to decide they are better than the other? I turned the tables on this.

I was wondering should I put text near my 'Fuck You' to explain the meaning. However, from the previous exhibition experiences, I have observed that most people will read the text before they see my work. For me, I felt the viewers lost the fun of discovering the message for themselves. I would like them to read my work without any text and then ask me questions. However, I found some viewers were quite shy and decided not to ask questions. Maybe they felt they were not smart or they might ask the wrong questions. It made me very frustrated to have to choose between having text that might distract the viewers and having no text but accepting some viewers would be totally lost about my work. I want my work

to communicate with the viewers. However, I found it challenging to convey the cultural message sufficiently to let people understand my work.

I used clay as my pen to write my emotional evidence about living in between cultures so the making process involved writing. I am living in an in-between condition, I still face some difficult and uncomfortable situations; sometimes, I do want to swear 'bad' words but I choose to keep calm and silent to face the problems. I choose to transfer my anger into making ceramics. For me, 'Fuck You' this Chinese symbol is a 'naked', direct, indirect word in my written explanation because in the real world I never swear in public. For people who understand Chinese it is very direct. However, for people who do not speak Chinese it is very indirect.

For me, this work challenged my attitude about the correct way to behave in a public space. In a second version of this artwork I decided to reference the traditional Blue and White porcelain to explore the value between the material and the Chinese symbol.

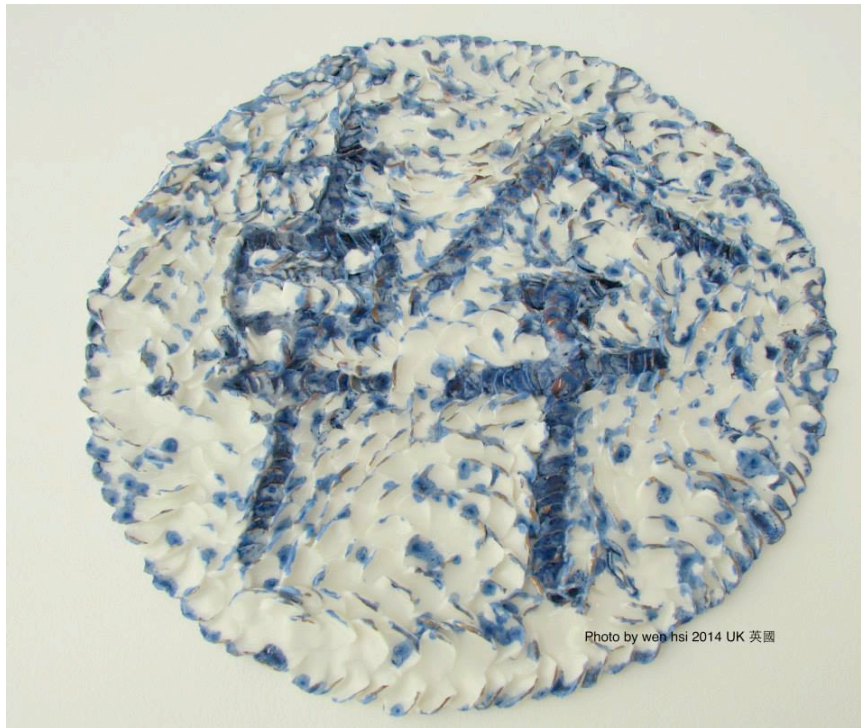


Figure 5.60: Wen-Hsi Chen. FUCK YOU.⁹

The beauty and attraction of 'exotic symbols' for Western people, clashes with the literal meaning of the characters. This could be leading to cultural misunderstanding. For this reason, I think it is important that I offer an English title as it conveys the anger that I feel in a piece that looks merely attractively exotic or Chinese.

Some Western people have a stereotypical view of Chinese characters, such as that Chinese symbols always have 'positive' meanings not 'negative' (rude) meanings. It seems the value of beauty is not decided by the cultural meanings, it is decided by who has the power to attribute value. The cultural values are different between the East and West. My work (Fuck You) creates an unbalanced relationship between image, pattern and actual meaning.

In this project, I have realized the symbolic Chinese characters are creating a surreal and exotic language to connect with foreign countries. For example,

⁹ Fuck You, 31x 31x2 cm Porcelain. Gold Lustre. Enamel. handmade. Wall piece.2014. Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

Christensen states that ‘when language and symbolism are taken out of their original context, the meaning is over simplified or completely lost’¹⁰. I do not agree the meaning is completely lost, but I do think it could be over simplified. I continue to explore this dilemma which is at the core of my research and questions.

5.5.2 Development of the work

During my time in the artist-residency, I realized I wanted to create artwork in response to a particular position. This raises the problem of ‘in-betweenness’. In the beginning, I put the porcelain slip into a tomato sauce bottle and used the nozzle as a pen. I wrote on the top of newspaper with direct firing in the kiln. However, the result was very disappointing as too many works were broken during firing (see Figure 5.61).

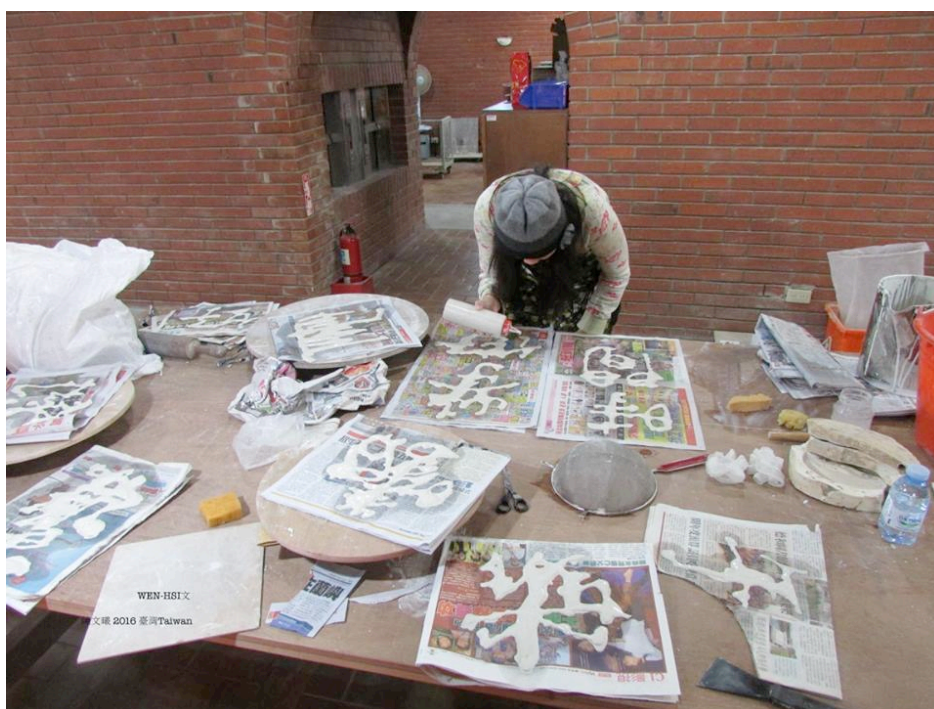


Figure 5.61: Me in the Yingge Ceramic Museum studio.¹¹

¹⁰ Christensen, Wendy *Sociological images. Lost in Translation: Tattoos and cultural Appropriation*, The Society Pages, 12 April 2012. Available from: <https://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2012/04/13/lost-in-translation-tattoos-and-cultural-appropriation/> [Accessed 11 November 2016].

¹¹ Photograph by Harman, Martin.

I changed my making process to write on top of plaster (Figure 5.62).



Figure 5.62: The making process I used was to write calligraphy using slip.¹²

I decided to use white porcelain slip as Chinese black inks. Also, I used the plaster as Chinese handmade paper. In traditional calligraphy there are always black characters on white paper, I wanted to subvert this classical perspective through my making process. However, I changed materials and continued to keep the calligraphy mobility through the flow of the liquid.

I used a tomato sauce bottle to write the characters on the top of the plaster. The nozzle did not have the soft traditional Chinese brush quality. Therefore, I needed to use my arm to create the body movement to express my energy, this action was similar to holding the Chinese brush, the arm and hand cannot touch the paper and need to follow regular breathing.

¹² Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

During my making process, I focused on my original Taiwanese culture, especially in relation to how attitude, gesture and personality are communicated through the writing. The traditional Chinese and Taiwanese social ritual of writing reflects the notion that 'the writing mirrors the writer' so I had been educated in the classical way to create calligraphy. My mother is a calligrapher and also is a Chinese teacher, therefore, for me, writing has a serious function as a ceremony. When I write, I need to take responsibility and care with each character. I need to hold the pen in the correct way and hold my spine upright.

Also, I needed to use my imagination to negotiate the words and white space (paper) in order to stimulate creativity within the limits of the paper and the creating context. This attitude is called respect for tradition. For me, I would like to find a way to both respect the tradition and introduce new elements into the classical concept.

During my residency, the setting that I used to create my slip writing was less formal than the traditional framework. This different setting allowed me to think more about how I can balance traditional behaviour with this new approach. I wanted to express how I can intertwine the tradition and my making process to reflect a cross-cultural positioning. I wanted my audience from both the East and the West to be able to understand my work. It was the most challenging aspect of my research.

5.5.3 Critical reflection

My residency exhibition focused on traditional Chinese writings because I felt my role was as a translation machine during my artist-residency. In Mainland China, people use simple Chinese writing. However, Taiwan and Hong Kong have continued to use traditional Chinese characters. I chose to use these traditional characters partly because I wanted to show a big difference between Taiwan and China. The other reason was that I already have 'Western eyes' and wanted to keep

the beauty of the traditional structure which is lost in the simple Chinese characters.

However, the museum had their agenda to 'not touch on political issues'. The political party in power in Taiwan is focusing on indigenous and Taiwanese writings. Therefore, my ceramic work was unintentionally seen as close to China. It implied that I wanted to unify Taiwan with China.

During my artist residency, I offered two artist-talks to meet my audience in the museum directly. It was a great opportunity to share my making process and to engage with the audience. Also I collected some audience feedback. (Please see Appendix 9). They were surprised at the meanings behind my intention (see Figure 5.63).



Figure 5.63: I shared my ideas to engage with the audience in the museum.¹³

Another challenging aspect was the fact that I learnt my ceramics in Britain. I do not have any 'ceramic Master roots' from Taiwanese university institutes (for example: the National Taiwan University of Arts, Tainan National University of the

¹³ Photograph by Harman, Martin.

Arts) and therefore do not benefit from protection and guidance from a ceramic Master.

Some audiences think, as I do not have a foundation (roots) in Taiwanese ceramics, that I am an 'international' ceramicist. This was a big tension when I was in Taiwan and made me feel very disappointed. It seems Taiwanese ceramics is still tied to a 'traditional concept' because it means respecting the 'Master and teacher'. 'Copying' or referencing the teacher's work and practice to keep this 'traditional concept' means 'respecting' in Taiwanese traditional cultures. For me, respecting Taiwanese culture is borrowing the elements from culture (for example: Taiwanese social ritual, traditional objects) to develop in my ceramic practice rather than simple imitation of the Master. However, I left an abstract space to let the audience think about what I did before I held the artist-talks. I created a space and freedom for the viewers. However, after I listened to a couple of audience responses, I realized that my installation was too metaphorical, and created a distance between the audience, my work, and my artist-talks. They found my intention very difficult to 'read'.

I have also realized my ceramic process is not Taiwanese because my work shows the 'maker's marks' and relates to 'my personal identity'. In Taiwan, most ceramic work still shows 'no marks and smooth surface' because to show marks means bad skills and work that is too 'naked' and 'un-finished'.

I am a 'foreigner' in British and Taiwanese ceramic contexts and society. I am living in-between. I deliberately chose the Chinese characters relating to 'ceramic language', for example: 'clay', 'ceramics', 'Yingge'. I did not choose political words, for example: 'Taiwan', 'independent', 'country'. Throughout the progress of the research, I have used different ways of making, for example fingers, mould-making and slip, to express the possibilities of clay. My fingers relate to my cultural identity as a Taiwanese artist who grew up in Taiwan and had direct experience of the culture. Mould-making is a very controlled process dominated by plaster to control the movement of slip; this reflects how Taiwan was colonized and

controlled by other countries. Slip represents my fluidity in-between different cultures.

During the artist-residency, my ceramic work created a tension. My intention was show the individual characters, flowing from the porcelain slip to help people to see the possibility of clay. It was such a 'beautiful' way to do this creative work. My project was writing through clay. The ceramic making process was part of the result. Language is not a border to create more labels, in my ceramic work language is communicating through the visual art to help us understand each other more.

The impact of my artist-residency in Taiwan is I experienced a full round journey from Taiwan to the UK to do my PhD study, and then from the UK to Taiwan to do my fieldwork, and then back to the UK to create my creative work for four years' development. In 2015, I travelled from the UK to Taiwan; these round trips have provided me with an 'in-betweenness' space to help me express my Taiwanese cultural identity and develop a visual language.

I also have realized that in Taiwan, artists need to explain a lot to express their ideas. There is less of a tradition of the audience engaging with an artwork and voicing a critical opinion. Audiences are not used to challenging an artist. I found this frustrating because I wanted them to question my work and the thinking process behind it. I realized that I have become more used to the Western approach to looking at art. In Taiwan, most ceramicists do not share their glaze recipe, the glaze is a kind of secret in Asia. Therefore, most of the audience was more interested in the technical aspects rather than the critical analysis. However, I know that one limitation of my research is that I did not do a lot of audience analysis. In the future, I would like to continue to develop this aspect.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

My project investigated the concept of ‘in-betweenness’, using a range of research methods including a field trip and creative practice methods to develop my making process. I extended my studio practice through making and exhibiting artwork in a range of different locations.

I found the process of continually reflecting on how practice was addressing my research questions very challenging. This was very different from my previous experience of creating artwork and, at times, I nearly lost confidence in continuing to develop my creative work, trying to balance it with its supporting critical context. Chapter 5 discusses this creative practice and shows how I explored cross-cultural identity within the practical element of the work.

Jiyi Ryu¹, a Korean PhD student in History of Art at the University of York in the UK, stated that ‘Wen-Hsi CHEN’s making and writing have a practical purpose, and she seems to be trying to make her academic work and artistic practice an active verb.’ During the Paris conference in 2015 (see Appendix 10) I became aware that being a PhD student and an artist require two different ways of thinking. During the process of working towards my PhD, I had to balance between research and practice; this is why, in the end, I ‘negotiated’ making projects to explore my approach to practice and address the research questions.

6.1 Research in Taiwan

Over the course of the project, I experienced a circular journey. After beginning the project in Britain in 2012, I returned to Taiwan in 2013, in the role of ‘researcher’. Back in Britain, I went through an intense period of reflection on the field trip, including transcription, translation and documentary video production. I also

¹ Ryu, Jiyi *Conference commentary*, 2015.

contributed documentation of Taiwanese ceramic work gathered during the field trip to two exhibitions in Britain. Following this, I felt a strong desire to return to making in clay. I began explore cultural identity through practice again and in 2015, I went back to Taiwan, this time using the role of 'artist'.

These journeys provided me with experience of being an outsider, a stranger, both inside and outside my homeland. I came to realise that my work belongs to neither British nor Taiwanese culture. However, as an artist-researcher, I have the freedom to live in a 'gap space' to create work, to respond to my own situation. This 'gap space' relates to in-betweenness. It allows me to think in a different way about in-betweenness. These cross-cultural experiences provide me with two different perspectives through which to address the questions of who I am and how I might express and communicate my situation.

6.2 Constructing the thesis

Each chapter in this thesis sets out a different approach to investigating the central theme of cross-cultural identity. However, for practice-led PhD students, the final PhD writing can be a significant challenge. For me, my writing seemed separate from the ceramic-making process. The writing does reflect and review the making, however the writing can be very 'flat'. It is not tactile like a piece of ceramic. The process of writing, shaping and refining the thesis, reflected my experience of negotiating and constructing my identity (but not the processes of constructing in ceramic). I felt this process to be intense and challenging. It is not easy to balance writing and making. It became a useful comparison to be drawn between the difficulties of constructing an identity and those of constructing a thesis, as the way of in-betweenness.

Elements of the project were 'unsuccessful', or did not develop in ways that I had expected. The residency in Denmark was one such, particularly as I found it very difficult to engage with the local audience because most people told me they were not aware that 'Taiwan' was a 'country'. This highlights the double post-colonial

tensions in my homeland: Taiwan and China, Taiwan and the West. These double layers were central to the development of the project. Another limitation was encountered with the audience studies. I collected feedback from exhibitions that included both field work material and my own practice, but wasn't successful in finding a method for collecting audience voices consistently through different types of exhibition, as referenced in the critical reflection at the end of Chapter 4.

Spivak states 'the feeling of cultural identity almost always presupposes a language'² This thesis creates a personal voice, using official language from two systems: traditional Chinese and English, and the language of my own ceramic practice to communicate with audiences and reconstruct my Taiwanese cultural identity in Western society.

The whole of my PhD writing and making has been a negotiation of a sense of belonging to an explicit language (English, ceramics and academic discourse), which is a voice that can be listened to and shared with other people. This project develops the idea of practice as a form of research, widens awareness and proposes new ways for ceramicists to explore the experience of being 'in-betweenness'; to develop cultural identity through creative practice. For me, the identity is a spectrum, it is not just between Taiwan and the UK.

6.3 Creative practice

Each of the practice projects expresses an aspect of, or a temporary moment within, the ongoing situation of 'in-betweenness'; a space that might allow for change and be operated by the artist themselves.

It was a process of displacement and transformation that, while very challenging, allowed me to explore my Taiwanese cultural identity. This situation can be very

² Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty 'Poststructuralism, marginality, postcoloniality and value'. In Mongia, Padmini ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. London: Arnold, 1997, pp. 198-222, p. 199.

uncomfortable, as British culture is so different from Taiwanese culture. In Britain I have not found it easy to express my emotions in front of strangers, but I was able to use the research process to explore and communicate feelings grounded in the anxiety of in-betweenness. It is a brave decision to talk about emotional feelings in an academic voice and to persuade other people that these feelings have an academic value.

The 8 Hours and Fingerprints works both address my feeling of being in a gap. The Taiwan-UK time difference has offered me unreal and disjointed feelings. I used eight circular porcelain pieces and plastic tubes to suggest that time is not just linear; it has no beginning and no end. The feeling of a gap is evoked between the lines in the 8 Hours piece. Two poems, in two languages and representing the two cultures, were written in response to the feelings of dislocation prompted by the process of making these works.

Fingerprints were present directly in front of the viewers; my signature was also represented as an artist, as a maker creating a work. It was a very visible 'language' to help me express a personal voice in a public space. However, the shape of my fingerprints represented small non-repeating elements, created by my meditative and breathing process. I used the Amis spirit to respect clay, creating abstract work, but still chose the literal title (Fingerprints) as identity.

My current home is the gap in-between because at the time of writing I have both UK and Taiwanese cultural identities. Both are equally important to me and I hope to make a life in the UK, but my residency status is precarious. Therefore, my research is split between Western and Eastern thought.

My Sculptural Spoons are a complex combination of the literal title referencing Taiwanese traditional wedding ceremony cake moulds and the Amis's use of spoons to polish the edges of their pots. The abstract form contrasts with functional spoons because the handle parts of my spoons are between 24-36cm. The metaphorical message relates to Taiwanese culture in which most men still

think that women's primary roles are housework and child-rearing. My sculptural spoons were emphasis on similar situation to myself: each individual spoon was less important than the whole group. Constructing each element and learning how to balance the display was very important. Each spoon supports each other to make up the whole sculpture, in the same way that Taiwanese society is based on cooperation, working to support each other; this is a reflection of my home culture and identity.

For the series Taiwanese Bananas, I used a literal and visible title to directly make a connection with my original cultural background. My ceramic Taiwanese bananas were bridging my personal emotional response to anxiety, 'uncomfortableness', ambiguity, mouldiness, colourfulness, with the doll's fingers representing myself struggling to survive. Therefore, my ceramic Taiwanese bananas most closely reflected my PhD thesis title '*On edge*'. I decided to display these ceramic bananas as sculptural wall pieces because I came to the conclusion that I did not want my work to occupy space. I wanted it to be as close to the wall as possible. It was in relation to my own situation, 'living in-between' as holding a space, but in some way not much space.

My mother tongue is a language with a long history and how it is used has become more and more sensitive, partly because of the political tension between Taiwan and China. During the artist-residency in Taiwan, the Language of Ceramics installation – my first museum installation - helped me understand how my research, which included some decorative plate-like works, was in contrast to non-traditional Taiwanese ceramic tableware. Some of the staff and audience feedback made me realize that this work mirrors my own in-between situation. I used thin, fragile, paper-like porcelain as a metaphor for in-betweenness. Because a Taiwanese audience could understand the meaning of my ceramic characters, which evoked the traditional elements of ancient Chinese, there was an aspect of this installation that was very literal for them but made them miss the underlying meaning.

6.4 Developing a visual language

My research aims were to explore the impact that living in a state of 'in-betweenness' can have on perceptions of self, to develop a visual language to communicate this experience and to explore my own expression of cultural identity in relation to theory in the field.

During the course of my PhD, I have used my experience from the field trip to Taiwan, my ceramic making, exhibiting my artwork and attending conferences and artist residencies to reflect on my own cultural identity and the challenges of living in-between two very different cultures. I have developed my ceramics as a way of communicating these challenges to a wider audience: a 'visual language' to express my feelings.

My research discusses new ways for in-betweens to explore their experience and to develop cultural identity through practice-based research. Through the use of a new range of research methods, my project constitutes a methodology for artists to explore the experience of in-betweenness and to develop a stronger sense of cultural identity through practice-based research.

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Appendix: 1 CV

Wen-Hsi Chen (Vicky)

E-mail: sweetukshop@gmail.com

Website: <http://www.wenhsichenceramics.com>

Facebook: Wen Hsi Harman ceramics

Instagram: Vickywenhsi. Ceramics.1694059

Twitter : @WENHSlartist

EDUCATION

2013-present Practice-led PhD student in ceramics
Bath Spa University, School of Art & Design, Bath, UK

2011 – 2013 Foundation Certificate, Creative Writing
Cardiff University, Cardiff, Wales, UK

2009-2010 MA Contemporary Crafts (Ceramics)
University for the Creative Arts, Farnham, UK

2006-2008 MA History of art in China (Ceramics)
National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan

2003-2006 BA Chinese Literature
Soochow University, Taipei, Taiwan

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2016 Floating Writing - Wen-Hsi , Bath Spa University, Sion Hill library, UK.
- 2016 The Language of Ceramics, New Taipei City Yingge Ceramics Museum, New Taipei City Yingge Ceramics Museum, New Taipei City Taiwan.
- 2015 Identity: Story of the object, Bath Spa University, Sion Hill library, UK.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 Pay & Display Prize 2017 Open Exhibition & Competition, Centrespace, Bristol, UK.
- 2016 ICMEA 2016 Emerging artists competition, International Ceramic Art Museums, Fuping, China.
- 2016 30th Gold Coast International Ceramic Art Award, Gold Coast City Gallery, Australia.
- 2016 Blackwells Art & Poster Shop, Oxford, UK.
- 2016 The Human Condition, MADL (mixed Art Design Life), Taipei, Taiwan.
- 2015 Wells art contemporary, Wells, England, UK.
- 2015 Taiwanese female ceramicists, PAPERArts, Bristol, UK.
- 2015 Good to eat - A dialogue between two Taiwanese artists in the UK, PAPERArts, Bristol, UK.
- 2015 New Designers, Business Centre, London, UK.
- 2015 Fusion where two minds collide, in the Royal United Hospital, Bath, UK.
- 2015 The 8th Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennale, Icheon, South Korea.
- 2015 A disappearing culture: The Amis Earthenware Tradition in Taiwan, Museum of East Asian Art, Bath, UK.

- 2015 Transformation, 44 AD Art Space, Bath, UK.
- 2014 Christmas Open - Deck the Walls, 44 AD Art Space, Bath, UK.
- 2014 CGP London 30th Annual Open exhibition, London, UK.
- 2014 'Art on a postcard' The Hepatitis C Trust, Whitfield Fine Art, London, UK.
- 2014 The muse: Collection, The Holburne Museum, Bath, UK.
- 2014 Laura's Place, 44AD Art Space, Bath, UK.
- 2014 Creative Sparks Gala, Bath Spa University, Newton Park, Bath, UK.
- 2014 PhD Progression Assessment show, Sion Hill Gallery, Bath Spa University, Bath, UK.

FAIRS

- 2016 Top Drawer Craft, Olympia, London, UK
- 2015 P/ART (Producers art fair), Hamburg , Germany.
- 2015 The other art fair, Bristol, Arnolfini, UK.

FUNDING

PhD Funding 2013-2015 Awarded an MOE
(The Ministry of Education in Taiwan) scholarship

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Taiwan Ceramics Residency in New Taipei Yingge ceramics museum in Taiwan.
From 3rd Feb to 3rd March 2016.

Guldagergaard-ICRC (International Ceramic Research Center)
From the 1st July to 2nd August 2015 in Denmark.

COLLECTIONS

2016 International Ceramic Art Museums, Fuping, China.

2016 New Taipei Yingge City Ceramics Museum in Taiwan.

2015 Korea Ceramic Foundation, Icheon, South Korea.

CONFERENCES/SYMPOSIA/PRESENTATIONS

2016 'Taiwanese cultural identity revelations through contemporary ceramic practice'

Bath Royal Literary & Scientific Institution, Bath, UK.

2016 'Ceramic bananas - Looking at Taiwanese cultural identity'

Early stage Researcher conference: Ethics

Bath Spa University, Corsham Court, Bath, UK.

2016 'Exploring Taiwanese cultural identity through contemporary ceramic practice'

New Taipei City Yingge Ceramics Museum in Taiwan.

2015 'Exploring Taiwanese cultural identity through contemporary ceramic practice'

The 8th Annual Conference of the Taiwanese Society of Young Scholars for Humanities and Social Sciences in Europe, Paris, France.

2014 'Taiwanese culture identity: object, smell, time'

Fireworks Now Ceramic Symposium, Round Studio, Aberystwyth
Art Centre, Wales, UK.

2013 'Taiwanese women potters – an initial fieldtrip

Ceramics - Filming, Recording, Digitising, Archiving'
School of Art, Aberystwyth University, Wales, UK.

PUBLICATIONS

2016 International Contemporary Artists Vol XI, p. 373.

2015 P/ART producers art fair booklet, pp.172, 173, 190.

2015 Taiwanese female ceramicists booklet.

2015 Transformation booklet.

2013 Aesthetica-The Art & Culture Magazine, February/March 2013,
Issue 51, artists' directory, p. 144.

Appendix 2: A list of questions for Taiwanese female ceramicists

Below are listed the emails I sent to Taiwanese female ceramicists. Firstly, I called them by international phone call to make sure that they understood what my research was and also to make sure they were willing to receive my interviews. Some Taiwanese female ceramicists wanted to prepare their answers before the interview. I sent to them the questions in traditional Chinese writing.

This translation is from my Taiwanese younger brother: Ian helped me translate this from traditional Chinese to English.

家鄉 Taiwan 研究之旅

時間:2013 年 4 月 17 日至 5 月 16 日

研究對象:Taiwan 女性作陶工作者

研究者:Bath spa university 博士班學生陳文曦 vicky

攝影訪問初稿:訪談內容

A:學習過程

1. 是從何時開始做陶?
2. 為何你自己知道你想做陶這件事情?
3. 為何你自己知道你可以做這件事情?
4. 是誰教導你做陶?在哪裡學習的?
5. 從事做陶(瓷)相關工作幾年了?
6. 是否去過其他國家學習相關做陶的經驗(留學/駐紮藝術家/藝術村/進修)?

A: Learning Experience & Background

1. When did you start to learn making ceramic?
2. Why do you know you want to make ceramic?
3. Why do you know you are able to make ceramic?
4. Who is your ceramic teacher? Where did you learn that?

5. How long have you been making ceramic?
6. Have you ever been to other countries for learning making ceramic? Like exchange student, artist residency and advanced studying.

B: 製作過程

1. 你是以何種心態在做陶?
2. 你做陶的目的是?
3. 你的靈感或是想法來自於哪裡? 和台灣文化/事件有關嗎?
4. 哪一種土你使用? 用台灣的土嗎? 哪一種工具使用? 自己做工具嗎?
5. 你用何種方式進行燒窯?
6. 當你在做陶的時候, 何種作品會被你留下?何種作品會被你丟棄(垃圾桶)? 或放在角落(盒子)?

B: Making Ceramic

1. What is the attitude toward making ceramic?
2. What is the purpose of making ceramic?
3. How and where do your ideas come from? Are they related to the cultures, events, or background in Taiwan?
4. What kind of the clay do you use? Does your clay from Taiwan? What kind of the tools do you use to make ceramic? Do you make your own tools?
5. How do you fire you clay in kilns?
6. When you make ceramic, what kind of the works will you keep or abandon? Or will you just let them go by putting into a dark corner?

C: 女生話題

1. 請問你有覺得自己是女性, 所以做出來的作品特別有女性特質?
2. 對你來說, 作品中何謂附有女性特質?對你而言, 又代表著何種意義?
- 3 你做陶是做給自己?還是給其他的女生?或是大家(包含男性)?
4. 在台灣妳可能需要扮演的角色很多元, 是母親, 是妻子, 是婆婆等, 你是如何處理和平衡每個角色, 特別當你還在做陶的時候, 不同角色時作品的風格是否有改變?

C: Topics about Female

1. Do you think your works is with femininity because you are female?
2. In your opinion, how do you define a work is with femininity? What does that matter and why does it become important to you?
3. Do you make ceramic for yourself, for women, or for everyone including men?
4. When you are in Taiwan, you may need to play different kinds of life role, like mother, wife, and grandmother. How do you balance your attitude and mind for different role plays, especially when you are making ceramic? Did your style of ceramic change due to the different role plays?

D: 觀眾/市場

- 1.你希望你的觀眾(台灣人/非台灣人)是如何看待你的作品?
- 2 你可以用你的作品維生?
- 3.台灣中央/市地方政府或是畫廊等民間機構，有幫忙你宣傳作品或是辦展覽嗎?

D: Audience & Market

1. Do you want your audiences to see and realize your works in any specific aspect?
2. Can you make a living by making works and sell them?
3. Does anyone or any organization help to publish your work or held an exhibition? Like central government of Taiwan, private gallery, etc.

E: 品味/價值

- 1.你是如何決定自己作品的價值(包含價錢)?
- 2.你是如何看待其他台灣女性做陶工作者的作品?

E: Price/Sense/Mentality

1. How do you define the value your work, including the sell price?
2. How do you think and measure the works from other female ceramic artists in Taiwan?

最後:對你而言未來的展望是?

Last: What's your plan in the future? What do you expect you can do?

.....

後語:

謝謝大家願意接受 vicky 攝影訪談，讓我說是很窩心也很感動。

十分感謝各位前輩們的幫忙和鼓勵，這是一項長達 3-4 年的研究計畫，因為有你們的幫忙，計畫才可以持續一直進行下去，vicky 也會不斷地努力下去，永遠不會放棄，會繼續努力讓更多人知道 Taiwan 的美好和你們這群熱愛陶的女生，是多麼努力生活著，我想這份研究是屬於每個愛 Taiwan 的人，只是藉由我小小的力量，讓大家團結起來，一起發聲。

還是一句老話: 謝謝大家的幫忙

敬祝

順心安康

Ending:

Thank you for accepting my visiting for video recording and talk so much to me. I feel so touched and happy. Thank all elders for your help and encourage. It's a long- term research project, about 3 to 4 years. I cannot keep my research on without your helps. Vicky will never give up and work hard on ceramics. Vicky will manage to let everyone in world know how beautiful Taiwan is. I will also let them know how many female ceramicists in Taiwan love ceramic so much, and your effort on clay and life. This research belongs to everyone who loves Taiwan. I'm just the first one to start it up. Let's get together and let the world know us!

I have to say this again, thank you for your help and encourage.

文曦 vicky Wen-Hsi 敬上

Appendix 3: Test diary

Test 2

Date: 11 August 2013

Aim:

Constructing language/Traditional Chinese writings

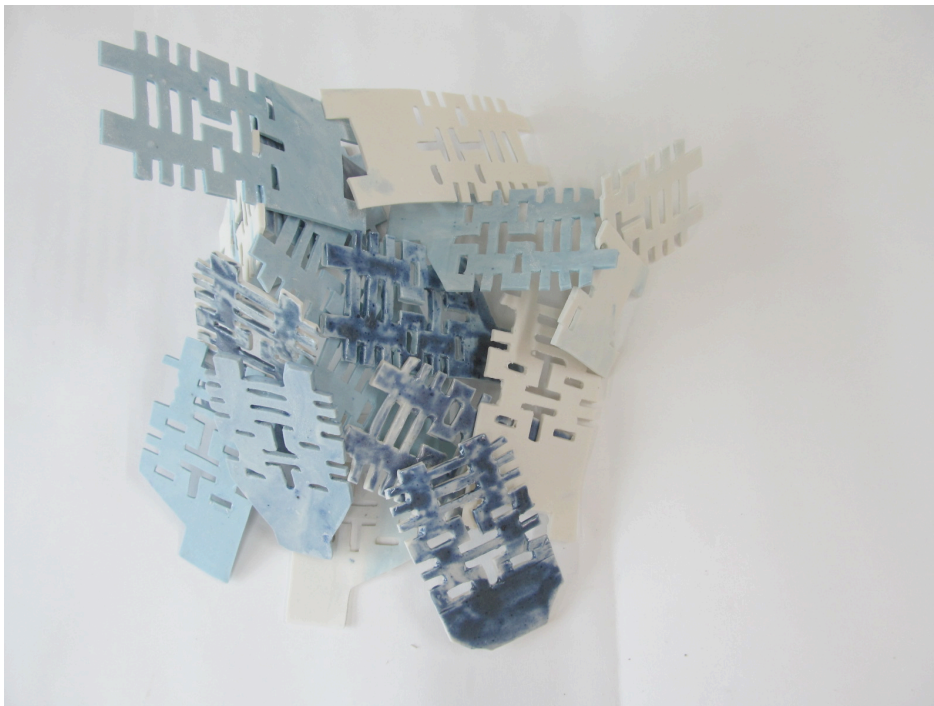
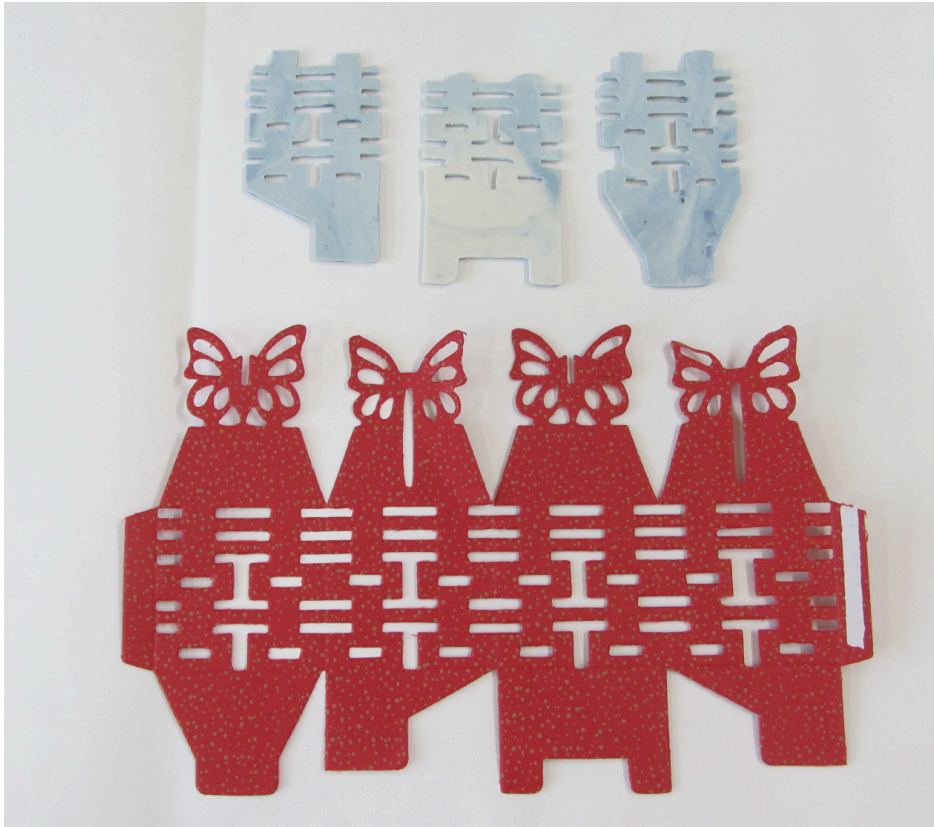
Process:

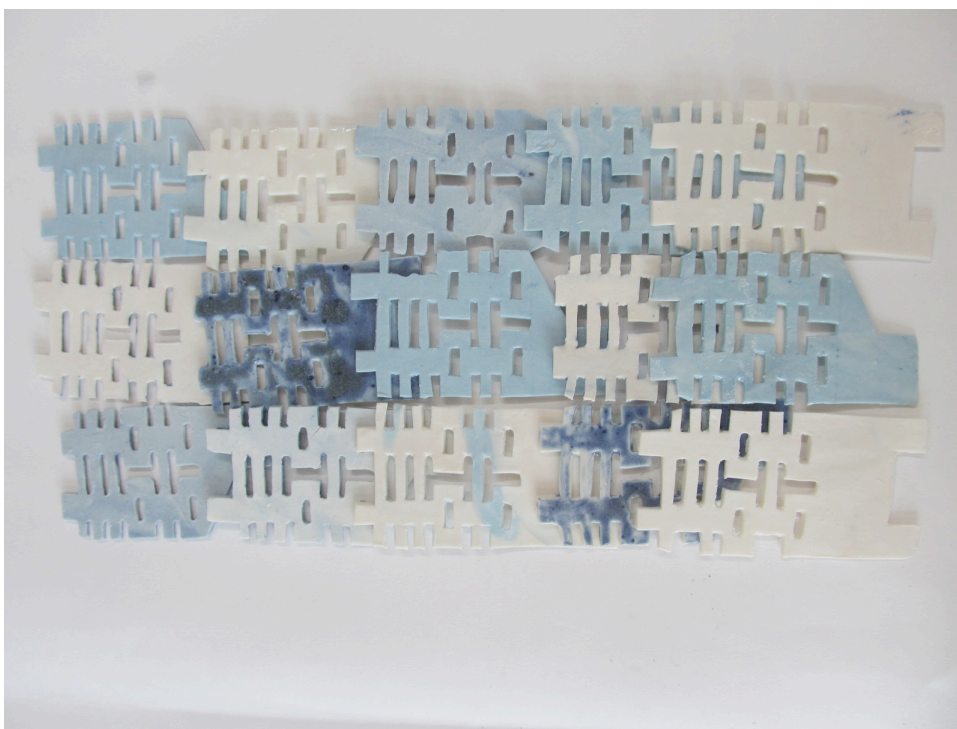
I collected the traditional wedding ceremony gift for the guest. The writing means 'got married'. I used porcelain clay carved with the same writings.

After firing, I got a couple of clay writings. I started to use them to construct the sculpture. I considered how two-dimensional paper could become three-dimensional clay sculpture. For colour, I made reference to blue and white porcelain traditional culture. Also I made reference to the British local wedding custom: 'something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue.'

Result:

Thinking about the possibility of the language and writings because no one will know the meaning behind my work in the West. My work became lost in the Western context. This work could be just the pattern and colour for the Western viewers.





Test 3

Date 6-8 January 2014

Aim:

Creating large size clay sculpture work to respond to the aboriginal Amis work.

Process:

I tried to use my fingers to pinch the clay to construct the sculptural work.

I used the stoneware and terracotta clay to think about the high and low culture in my work.

Result:

After 1000°C electric kiln firing, I got the result. I am not too sure about the form because I just allowed the clay to pile up when I built it.



Test 7

Date 12 January 2014

Aim:

Find the right shape for my sculptural clay work.

Process:

Through the ink and brush to think about the form and how to organize my fingerprints.

Result:

I have realized I like the way to use single small units to construct the flat piece. It might be not necessary to create a sculptural work. The 'Flat' quality is similar to my real situation – living in the between. Sometimes, I feel I just like the piece of paper, very slim living in the gap.



Test 11

Date 22 January 2014

Aim:

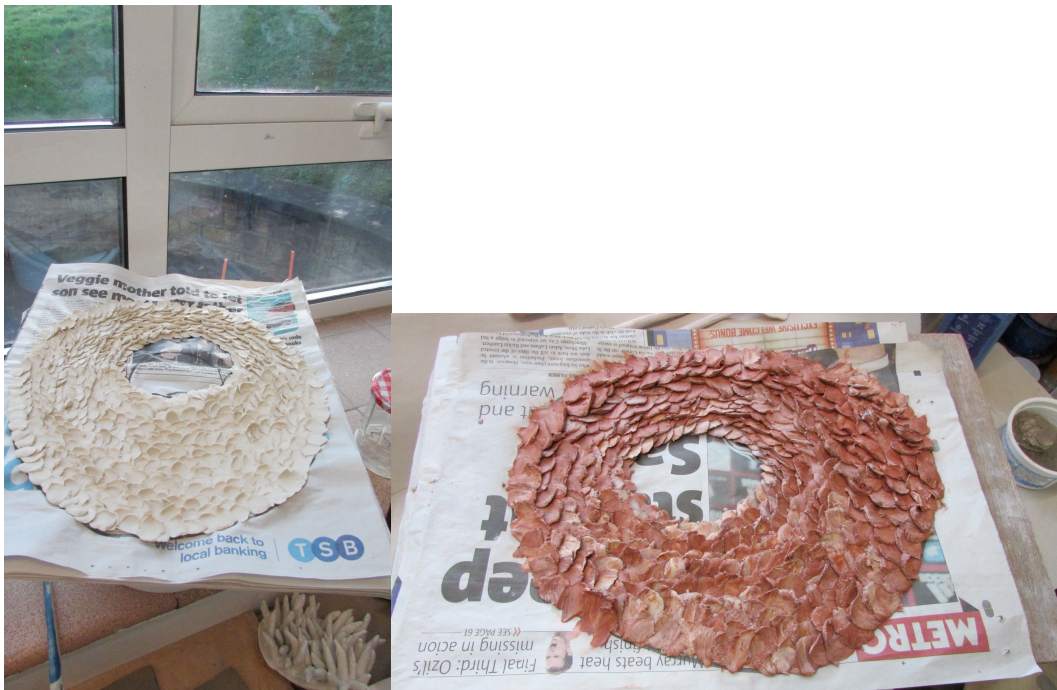
Created the flat circle form.

Process:

From test 11, I enjoyed creating a flat work. In this test, I start to think about my breathing and my making time. It seems the start and end are not apparent in my work. It is circular work. In the beginning, I used porcelain. In the second piece I used porcelain mixed up with iron oxide to mix up the purity of the porcelain. My research is about cultural identity. I wondered whether anyone has pure identity in the real world. Like me, I do not have pure identity from my family. I am half Taiwanese and half Chinese from my family tree.

Result:

I like that the circular form and flat quality are close to my situation.



Test 18

Date 12 February 2014

Aim:

Put two pieces together to think about living in two worlds.

Process:

I continue to use my fingerprints to create two circular forms.

I mixed up the iron oxide with porcelain.

Result:

I like the result, especially like the conscious (the front side) and unconscious (back side). This making process reflects my circumstance in two worlds.





Test 34

Date 21 March 2014

Aim:

Find a way to display my fingerprints work.

Process:

Made an appointment with plastic technical staff: Tim to discuss the possibility of tubes.

Result:

I like the plastic tubes' transparent quality. It reminds me of the Taiwanese history of plastic and ceramic. The two materials created tension in the Yingge ceramic industry during 1969¹ More plastic products were imported to Taiwan, some people liked to use the light and colourful plastic products rather than ceramic functional products (heavy and not colourful) in Taiwan. From this particular historical evidence I decided to use plastic tubes.



¹ 鶯歌製陶 200 年 Yingge's ceramics 200 years [Online]Available from:
<http://digital.ceramics.ntpc.gov.tw/yingo200/history/chronic3.htm>
(Accessed 21 March 2014)

Test 36

Date 25 March 2014

Aim:

How can I use my art practice to let other people understand the living in between situation?

Process:

From my test 1 drawings, I created a chicken feet mould, this time I used plaster to create a couple of chicken feet.

Result:

I like the plaster; this material could quickly achieve my art practice. Sometimes, I needed to release the tension about my supporting research with my studio practice and I was very tired. I needed to learn to enjoy the material and not think 'too much', Martin Creed's 'Thinking/Not Thinking (Work-1090)²' inspired me a lot. As a practice-led PhD student how can my art practice convince other people that it has value and contributes to knowledge? It is not an easy process. For me, another layer is that I need to transfer Eastern thinking to the Western way. I need to think how Western people can understand my art practice. I tried to use the 'West' way to let people feel more engaged with my artwork. However, some people kept silent about my work, I felt frustrated because I didn't know their thoughts. I am an outsider also my artwork.

² Martin Creed. Thinking / Not Thinking (Work-1090) [Online]Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6-7brUXDWY> (Accessed on 25 March 2014)



Test 37

Date 27 March 2014

Aim:

To review my research field trip and my studio practice.

Process:

Put some Amis pottery on my studio table and my test 1 finished result chicken feet together.

Result:

I tried to make a vivid connection between my supporting research and my studio practice work in my progression show. In the first photo are Amis pottery and my hand-built fingerprints work. Both works used our fingers to push and pinch clay. From my research field trip, I particularly realized that the Taiwanese aboriginal women - Amis did not use any pottery wheels or coiling techniques to create their forms. When I interviewed the elder woman she told me that traditionally they used their knee to create the form and then used their fingers to pinch and push clay to build the bowl. Their body was part of their making pottery tools.

Amis women decided to not leave any fingerprints on the surface. They 'clean out' the evidence of the making processes. However, I decided to show some of their making process in a vivid way. In an obvious way, for viewers my fingerprints became an abstract pattern.

A studio classmate asked 'do you like to repeat work?' It is a very interesting question, who does not repeat to make artwork? When the ceramic surface has been being cleaned up, the surface is smooth and with no marks. People don't realize that is repetitive because it is easy to get rid of the process and just look at the final result.

My fingerprints show the making process and final result at the same time. I think it is a kind of stereotype to look at the final result instead of looking at the making process. I have realized doing similar art practice does not mean 'repeat'.

People need to understand the making process to be conscious that there is a

difference between 'similar' and 'repetitive'. From this 'repeat' issue, I can see most people 'read' my ceramic work in very superficial way. From this I need to more clearly write about my making process in my PhD thesis and about my overall research aims and the context of an exploration of identity.

In the second picture, I use mould making to create a chicken feet piece. My fingers pushed and pinched clay into the chicken feet mould, but no fingerprints show in the clay because two moulds together compress to form the chicken feet shape. The action of push and pinch are similar to the concept of the Amis pottery making process. With the concept of using fingerprints as my tool, this was main way I learnt from my research field trip to influence my studio practice.

I did not take the Amis pottery shape or colour into my own work. I decided to not make any functional work, such as vessels, bowls, containers because I wanted to emphasize that living in between culture, is living in no 'firm' form and container, just drifting to anywhere. From this perspective, why do I need to create a firm form to pretend everything is fine living in between cultures?





Test 38

Date 27 March 2014

Aim:

My research field trip - the aboriginal Aims documentary film should project on top of my ceramic pieces?

Process:

I am thinking about showing my documentary film in my progression show, I am wondering about projecting the film on to my ceramic work instead of the white gallery wall. I wanted to create a layer/link between my research field trip and my studio practice. I put some writing samples on the top of my handmade porcelain to see the result.

Result:

I am still not too sure, should I project the film onto the white wall?



Test 40

Date 31 March 2014

Aim:

Photo of the Taiwanese traditional wedding ceremony object.

Process:

I collected Taiwanese wedding ceremony objects, this is one ceramic object.

Result:

The 'fire cage (heater)'³ is symbol that the couple will keep warm together no matter whether they experience good or bad things. They will always help and think of each other. This is the small example for the modern 'traditional' weddings, because no one uses pottery as fire cages (heater) in Taiwan anymore. People uses electric heaters to warm up the room in the winter. This life style change has also changed the material people use.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

³ 火籠. PChome online 個人新聞台[online]Available from:
<http://mypaper.pchome.com.tw/uouo6679/post/1322975846> (Accessed 31 March 2016)

Appendix 4: Example of an interview transcription

[Interview redacted in this digitized version, p241-p261]

Appendix 5: Forms

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Appendix 6: My early stage studio practice development

In the first stage of my studio practice, I referred to my supporting research: the field trip, particularly the aboriginal Amis women's pottery making process and traditional Taiwanese wedding ceremony social rituals and objects. One of the most important objects I investigated is the traditional Taiwanese wedding cake called Xibing (囍餅), these traditional wedding moulds make the special wedding cakes given to the guests (see Figure 1). Inside the cake there are red beans or green beans and the outside is made of pastry. (see Figure 2) It is traditional practice to use the wooden mould to produce a large number of the cakes at once. The traditional wooden mould is not just used for wedding ceremonies but also used for souvenirs or everyday (see Figure 3) or the moon cake ceremony (see Figure 4).

There are a couple of versions of the original moon cakes story, for example: Everlington explains that about moon cakes 'Many attribute them to the moon goddess Chang'e (嫦娥), who legend has it took an immortality elixir and floated to the moon. The other theory is that the moon cakes were distributed to all Han Chinese with a hidden message telling them to rebel against the Mongols during the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368)' ¹. During the Moon Festival, people give and receive small, elaborate moon cakes that symbolize the circle of family love and unity. Therefore, the different pattern are associated with the wooden moulds. For example: the turtle pattern means long life and is said to bring good life for the couple and family. (see Figure 5)

¹ Everlington, Keoni. *Focus Taiwan New Channel. How to celebrate Mid- Autumn Festival in Taiwan*. 24 September 2015 [Online] Available from: <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/asoc/201509240016.aspx> (Accessed 20 November 2016)

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 1: Different types of wedding cake wood mould.²

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 2: Traditional Taiwanese wedding cakes.³

² Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi

³ Sweetway[Online] Available from: <http://www.sweetway.com.tw/product.php?i=16>
(Accessed 17 October 2016)

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 3: Chinese wooden biscuit moulds.⁴

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 4: Moon Cake.⁵

⁴ Chinese Wooden Biscuit Moulds. Stylebriefhongkong.[Online] Available from: <http://www.stylebriefhongkong.com/chinese-wooden-biscuit-moulds/> (Accessed on 17 October 2016)

⁵ This photo came from Madison Taipei. 22/7/2016 [Online] Available from: <http://solomo.xinmedia.com/taiwan/84159-mooncake> (Accessed on 21 October 2016)



Figure 5: Taiwanese traditional wedding cake mould.⁶

The next picture shows wedding candles, which are one of the traditional wedding objects. They were collected from my grandfather's relatives (Figure 6). The top part of the structure is used to display long red candles, the middle part shows the Chinese symbols that translate to 'getting married'. It is important that they are red candles in Chinese or Taiwanese wedding ceremonies (Figure 7) because red is a colour associated with weddings, Chinese New Year and any good things in Chinese or Taiwanese cultures. At certain levels, Taiwanese culture still has a strong connection with Chinese culture. Janssens mentioned that 'lucky red is the symbol for good fortune and joy, found everywhere during Chinese New Year.'⁷ Red can be very positive and red roses are the sign of love and red carnations are worn as buttonholes at weddings in the West.

⁶ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi

⁷ Janssens, Felix, *Identity colour codes- how colours unite us all – a visual guide for creative and anthropologist minds*. Netherlands: BIS Publisher, pp.108,109.



Figure 6: Wedding candles.⁸

⁸ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 7: This is a pair of dragon and phoenix candles for a wedding night.⁹

The next objects are my mother's wedding day cup collection. Her wedding was held more than twenty-five years ago, but the objects are still kept in good condition (see Figure 8). The photo (see Figure 9) shows how the wedding cups are used in the ceremony. The bride brings Chinese herbal tea for her husband and future family members. After drinking the tea, they will put red envelopes containing money in the cups to symbolize that the two families are joining together and hope that the couple will have a baby as soon as possible.

⁹ From this article: Traditional Chinese Marriage Custom, it mentions that ' This is a pair of dragon and phoenix candles for wedding night. Dragon and phoenix mean good luck and harmony. Lighting dragon and phoenix candles is very important for Chinese wedding night. The two candles stands for the newlyweds. They also imply the good wish for the newlyweds living together till white hair with love and good luck. The candle is 22cm long and 4cm in diameter. It is smokeless and no candle tears when burning.' China Private Tour Guide Service [Online] Available from: http://www.chinatourguide.net/12_19.htm (Accessed on 17 October 2016)

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 8: My mother's wedding cups.¹⁰

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 9: My friend's wedding photo.¹¹

¹⁰ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi

¹¹ Special thanks to my friend who gave me the permission to use her wedding photo.

During the traditional wedding ceremony process, the bride will break a red brick and cross a container of fire – this means she is getting rid of her bad habits and looking forward to a new life. In this photo (Figure 10) the lady on the left is holding a black umbrella to shelter the bride from evil spirits. Another popular idea is that the bride may already be pregnant so the black umbrella is used to protect the unborn infant (Figure 10).

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 10: The bride has broken the red brick and crossed the fire container.

After all these rituals have been performed, the couple will hold another ceremony with their friends and eat food together in a local restaurant. Nowadays, the couple will arrive by car; previously it was in a cart pulled by a cow. In one photo (see Figure 11) the bride is throwing her fan out of car to remove all bad habits from her previous life.

In the next photo (see Figure 12) there are objects (a chicken, pineapples, traditional money and writing) we can see an assemblage of mass produced objects arranged in a basket for display at the weddings. All these objects symbolize the wedding ceremony. Traditionally guests would give the wedded couple money symbolizing good luck for their relationship, in return the married couple would bring cake for guests created by using moulds such as these wedding cakes (see Figure 2).

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 11: The bride will get rid of the fan.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 12: The wedding objects.

Chicken with turtle

Previously my Masters degree focused on gender aspects and I used the metaphor of the chicken to express the traditional Taiwanese wedding ceremony. I created a series of blue and white cups and then displayed them in a circle to represent the wedding ceremony, to show how traditionally guests sat down together around a circular table. This work was awarded: World Event Young Artists in 2012.¹²

¹² The world event young artists 2012.1000 artists, 100 nations.10 days, 7-16 September 2012 [Online] Available from: http://worldeventyoungartists.com/artists/wen-hsi_chen (Accessed 10 October 2016)

I enjoyed this subject and continued to develop it through my early stages of PhD study. After I undertook my field trip I became fascinated by the traditional wedding ceremony and the objects involved like the wooden moulds used to shape cakes. I wondered about the nature of the wedding ceremony process as family and friends would always ask, and still do ask, the question of when the couple plan to have a baby. In response to this I hand-painted black eyes onto this art piece to show how others keep an eye on the bride's stomach. I used baby's hands to help create this piece to illustrate these external pressures on the woman's life after getting married. (see Figure 13 and Figure 14)



Figure 13: The pressure of babies' hands.¹³

¹³ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi



Figure 14: After firing.¹⁴

I continued to transform the ready-made objects into the ceramic objects. The hands (see Figure 15) is sculptural porcelain work. The multiple mould-made baby hands were attached to a big hand, with hand painted Chinese characters symbolizing 'the couple will live forever' and 'the couple will love forever' on the side. This portrays traditional wedding ceremony representations of women as graceful, weak, soft, competent 'octopi'. The Chinese character 'Forever' states that traditional Taiwanese women would be timid and uncertain in their physical engagement with their husband and the world.

¹⁴ Taiwanese traditional wedding ceremony cake wooden mould with the longevity 2014 Death/ Life Control/ Out of the control Happy/ Unhappy Earthenware , porcelain 10 x 14 x 4 cm Wall piece 2014. Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi



Figure 15: The hands ¹⁵

After that I continued to think about myself living in a different culture and the ways in which I have been changed by it. I discovered the identity issue, it is not simple because identity is invisible and visible at the same time. This process carries tensions and ambiguous feelings. I decided to transfer this predicament to combine two different types of animal (chicken, turtle) to create a new species. (see Figure 16 and Figure 17). I also created a short film (the journey)¹⁶ to portray thick fog and bring a more mysterious quality to the question of how the identity is visible and invisible (see Figure 18).

¹⁵ The hands 2013. porcelain. 20 x 15 x 8 cm. The photo by Christina Freeth

¹⁶ The journey. [Online] Available from:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snE858oumyl&feature=em-upload_owner
 (Accessed on 10 October 2016)



Figure 16: The turtle side.



Figure 17: The chicken side.



Figure 18: The chicken with turtle inside water.

In this project I explored how to use the objects relating to material culture, to express identity, asking who has the power to judge the other's identity.

Chicken part

Chicken feet are a delicacy in Taiwan and a very familiar object. In Britain, they are not familiar in shops ¹⁷and seem slightly disgusting or 'abject' because it is not common to see whole animals on the table and especially not chicken feet.

Interpretation 1

After a traditional wedding ceremony, the bride will traditionally live with her husband's family. Her own parents invite her and her new husband to visit them. They (the mother-in-law and father in-law) will present the daughter and son-in-law with a chicken as a gift.

¹⁷ Sole food: could chicken feet to China be Britain's next big export? Independent, Friday 16 November 2012.[Online] Available from: <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/food-and-drink/news/sole-food-could-chicken-feet-to-china-be-britains-next-big-export-8320705.html> (Accessed on 5 November 2016)

Interpretation 2

In the traditional ritual they will use a real chicken to lead the ceremony. The bride's family will prepare two chicks as a metaphor to for 'building the family'.

Interpretation 3

Traditionally the hen and rooster would have had their feet bound nine times in red string, this means 'love forever' because 9 means 'long' in Taiwanese. The bride's family will put a hen and a rooster under the newly wedded couple's bed to act as a symbol to determine the gender of the babies as on that night the couple make love. If the hen comes out from under the bed first it means the bride's offspring will be a girl. On the other hand, if the rooster goes out first it will be a boy.

I used this point to explore the gender aspect, the chicken as a judgment to determine the gender of the baby. This puts pressure on the bride in the future. Getting married is a big challenge for women in Taiwan. Some traditional families in Taiwan will need to live with the mother-in-law and father-in-law to help them deal with everything, including cooking food. Marriage¹⁸ in Taiwan, is not just about two people in love but about two families joining together.

Overall: Using the Chicken as a wedding ceremony element means 'building up the family' for blessing for the new couple. The eggs are meant to represent that the bride will have a couple of babies in the future.

Turtle part

Interpretation 1

My idea was inspired by the traditional Taiwanese wedding wood mould.

¹⁸ In traditional Taiwanese society in 1975 women get marry quite young around 20-24 years ago.. However, currently situation in 2015 around 35-40 years ago. Department of Household Registration, M.O.I. Taipei, Taiwan. [Online] Available from: <http://www.ris.gov.tw/346> (Accessed on 17 October 2016)

It means: long life.

Interpretation 2

The real turtle cake (see Figure 19)

The red colour means good luck¹⁹ and traditionally it is made from the plant: 紅花米²⁰. However, currently, the red colour is made from red colour food additive.

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 19: The real turtle cake.²¹

I continued to transform the ready-made objects into the ceramic objects. The hands (see Figure 15) is sculptural porcelain work. The multiple mould-made baby hands were attached to a big hand, with hand painted Chinese characters symbolizing 'the couple will live forever' and 'the couple will love forever' on the

¹⁹ 臺灣大百科全書 Encyclopedia of Taiwan. Ministry of Culture 文化部. [Online] Available from: <http://nrch.culture.tw/twpedia.aspx?id=11827> (Accessed 21 October 2016)

²⁰ 紅花米 is Teak is Verbenaceae Tectona grandis L.f. Yahoo knowledge 奇摩知識[Online] Available from: <https://tw.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20051011000014KK02054> (Accessed on 21 October 2016)

²¹ 周老師的美食教室 Teacher Zhou's Food Classroom. June 16 Thursday 2011. 250 紅龜糕 Hung Kuei Cakes.[Online] Available from: <http://homeeconomics.pixnet.net/blog/post/66280233-250> (Accessed 10 October 2016)

side. This portrays traditional wedding ceremony representations of women as graceful, weak, soft, competent 'octopi'.

The motivation that drives 'Get married' (see Figure 20) is from the Chinese character 'get married'. Those characters are easily recognized by an Asian audience, distinguishing its meaning and symbol, however it is not easy for non-Asian viewers. My inspiration came from an old saying from traditional UK wedding culture 'something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue'. This relates to the object and ideas about transferring my personal situation between cultures. In 'Get married' colour is borrowed from 'something blue'. The message is delivered by mixing up with blue stain and porcelain to create two sculptures.



Figure 20: Get married.²²

²² Get married, 25 x 25 x 7 cm Porcelain 2013. The photo by Christina Freeth

Appendix 7: I am not Japanese, thanks and Rose petals

I am not Japanese, thanks

I wondered if the Asian ceramic figures could bring more meaning to my central research about exploring cultural identity. In 2009, I arrived at Heathrow airport and I crossed the British border, the customs officer checked my passport. At that time my fringe was cut straight across, which I thought was normal. However, the customs officer looked at my passport and said 'where are you come from?' I said: 'Taiwan'. She said 'you changed your hair-style, it looks "Japanese"'. At that time, I did not know how to answer that question, I just smiled. After I arrived at the University for the Creative Arts in Farnham, some students also thought I came from Japan because of my hair-style and clothes. I felt very aware of this observation, I started to buy clothes from the local shop and changed my hair style because I wanted to wash out 'being Japanese' images. At that time, I felt the clothes were part of my skin, part of my identity. However, these changes created more questions for myself and I wanted to know how Western people look at people from Asia. Do they really want to understand Asian culture? Or do some people just rely on the clothes and hair-style to make judgments? Do people really know someone from the inside not from the outside?

I decided to put the Japanese geisha into my coarse fingerprint work. I decided to show the geisha's upper body to people because I would like to discuss about how people judge other people's cultural identity through the face colour, hair-style and clothes. I decided to name this work '我不是日本人,謝謝.I am not Japanese, thanks'. My handmade fingerprints work used stoneware and hand painted Luster, with the Japanese geisha ready-made object. See (Figure 1). However, when I introduced this work to a Japanese artist, he very gently mentioned that 'this work may offend Japanese people'. I was very surprised this response because I never thought about Japanese feelings. In the end, I decided to cease using women's figures to deal with Asian female identity due to the risk of offending Japanese people.



Figure 1:I am not Japanese, thanks.¹

In order to avoid the risk of causing offense, albeit unintentionally, I chose to keep silent and stop making that kind of piece. I decided to focus on the relationship between clay and my touch. Classen states that ‘Touch is not just a private act. It is a fundamental medium for the expression, experience and contestation of social values and hierarchies. The culture of touch involves all of culture.’² I used my fingers interacting with the clay to express my personal identity.

It was not my intention to cause offence; my original idea was to create a discussion about how Western society thinks about non-Western females. However, this experiment was a failure and became a label of racial discrimination. Some people did not engage with me and my work as they did not take the time to listen to my explanation. In cross-cultural situations misunderstanding and judgment are part of the process of cultural awareness.

¹ Stoneware, ready made object, Luster 30 x 35 x 24 cm. 2013. Photograph by Christina Freeth

² Classen, Constance. ‘Fingerprints Writing about Touch’. In: Classen, Constance ed. *The Book of Touch*. Oxford and New York: Berg, 2005, p1.

Rose petals

I continued to develop my original concern about the aspects of gender in wedding ceremonies, especially in wedding rituals. In an article by Jo Chesser on wedding rituals she suggests that ‘ a discussion of the symbolism represented by different rituals included in a wedding suggests that if rituals are consciously chosen and included in the wedding, there may be an important and lasting effect on the marriage.’³ I realized that wedding ceremonies have a large impact on the bride because people consider a marriage as a union of two families, not just a union of two individuals. Traditionally in a Western Christian wedding, the bride wears ‘the white dress [which] represents purity, whereas the red petals represent fertility. Therefore, the image of the flower girl is meant to depict the bride’s loss of purity for that of romance and fertility with her marriage’⁴ However, I cannot see any social rituals related to the bridegroom; it seems that most wedding ceremonies are concerned with the bride.

In wedding ceremonies, rose petals are often thrown over the couple as they leave the ceremony. I was wondering about small units and the colour pink to express the idea of numerous rose petals at a wedding ceremony. Therefore, I created simple rose petals out of porcelain and displayed them on white paper. I used an underglaze pencil to write the traditional Chinese character ‘lucky’ (Figure 2). The symbolism is good luck for a quick pregnancy. This sentence reflects the expectations of traditional society after a marriage ceremony.

³ Jo Chesser, Barbara. *Analysis of Wedding Rituals: An Attempt to Make Weddings More Meaningful*, Family Relations, Vol.29, No2, 1980, p204.

⁴ Petal Garden Blog, History of Rose Petals in Weddings. 2013. [Online] Available from: <http://www.petalgarden.com/blog/2013/04/03/history/> (Accessed 6 June 2016)



Figure 2: lucky⁵

The colour pink for me, is always related to a Japanese context because when the Japanese government occupied Taiwan, they planted Japanese cherry trees to make them feel at home in Taiwan. It was their homesickness associated with their custom of ‘flower-viewing’⁶. Fuse explains ‘what is the beautiful spirit of traditional Japan. It is the mountain cherry blossom, blooming in the enveloping morning light.’⁷ The Japanese reproduced their spirit in Taiwan during Japanese rule, the flowers showed their ambition to control Taiwan. Flowers became strong political strategy. They imposed their landscape onto the Taiwanese landscape.

Japanese cherry trees were, and for some Taiwanese still are, a symbol of Japanese rule in Taiwan. Therefore, it reminded me of the tension between Japan and Taiwan during the colonial period. Jiji explains that ‘Japanese cherry trees had been planted in the township until the end of World War II, when they were all cut down because they were seen as a symbol of Japanese rule.’⁸ It also reminded me of traditional Japanese painting, which has depicted Sakura (cherry blossom)

⁵ Photograph by Christina Freeth

⁶ Fuse, Hideto. ‘Notes on the Color Pink in Japanese Art’ In: Nemitz, Barbara ed. *Pink-The Exposed Color in Contemporary Art and Culture*. Germany: Hatje Cantz, p56.p57.

⁷ Fuse, Hideto. ‘Notes on the Color Pink in Japanese Art’ In: Nemitz, Barbara ed. *Pink-The Exposed Color in Contemporary Art and Culture*. Germany: Hatje Cantz, p57.

⁸ Jiji, 2015. Cherry trees planted in Taiwan in commemoration of 1930 anti-Japan uprising. The Japan Time.[Online] Available from: http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/02/03/national/cherry-trees-planted-taiwan-commemoration-1930-anti-japan-uprising/#.V1kxL9eXp_s (Accessed 7 June 2016)

‘since ancient times’⁹. In my childhood, my grandfather and grandmother’s home always had a traditional Japanese cherry blossom painting hanging on the wall. Their painting was similar to this (Figure 3).

[Image redacted in this digitized version due to potential copyright issues]

Figure 3: Koichi Okada Japanese Woodblock¹⁰

In the Japanese context, Nemitz explains ‘the colour pink is associated with sakura, the blooming of the cherry blossom. This natural occurrence is also a major cultural event.... They [falling petals] are a symbol of the death of young warriors - the Samurai - who fell in battle while in the full bloom of their lives. Looking at cherry trees, it seems that universal feelings of beauty and pain’.¹¹ I used my artwork as a symbol to express the beauty and pain called ‘77 Cherry Blossoms’ (Figure 4).

⁹ Fuse, Hideto. ‘Notes on the Color Pink in Japanese Art’ In: Nemitz, Barbara ed. *Pink-The Exposed Color in Contemporary Art and Culture*. Germany: Hatje Cantz,p57.

¹⁰ Koichi Okada Japanese Woodblock.c. 1950s, this (*ato-zuri*) undated later edition published by Unsodo. UkiyoeGallery.com. New York. [Online]Available from :<http://www.ukiyoeGallery.com/product/koichi-okada-japanese-woodblock-print-mt-fuji-in-spring-time> (Accessed on 9 June 2015)

¹¹ Nemitz, Barbara. ‘Pink- The Exposed Color’. In: Nemitz, Barbara ed. *Pink-The Exposed Color in Contemporary Art and Culture*. Germany: Hatje Cantz,p28.



Figure 4: 77 Cherry Blossoms

After a couple of experiments, I realized the colour pink is associated with my childhood memories. Pink is the colour in between red and white, it is a gap colour. Schawelka explains 'pink reveals its power of attraction and its charm because it does not actually call something by its name. Instead, pink suggests between the lines.'¹² For me, pink links my personal experience and Taiwanese cultural national identities with my homeland. Nemitz states 'Pink is erotic.'¹³ It seems pink is an outsider in the normal colour range and some people do not always think about this color. I also continued to develop the colour pink in relation to the context, 'think pink'¹⁴ Currently, it seems pink has become the colour of little girls' lives. This was an interesting context when I showed my work 'Rose petals installation' at the 44 AD gallery and art studio in Bath in 2014¹⁵ (Figure 5).

¹² Schawelka, Karl. 'Showing Pink-Biological Aspect of the Color Pink'. In: Nemitz, Barbara ed. *Pink-The Exposed Color in Contemporary Art and Culture*. Germany: Hatje Cantz, p50.

¹³ Nemitz, Barbara. 'Pink- The Exposed Color'. In: Nemitz, Barbara ed. *Pink-The Exposed Color in Contemporary Art and Culture*. Germany: Hatje Cantz, p26.

¹⁴ Girls Are Taught To 'Think Pink,' But That Wasn't Always So, 2014, Heard on Morning Edition [Online] Available from: <http://www.npr.org/2014/04/01/297159948/girls-are-taught-to-think-pink-but-that-wasnt-always-so> (Accessed on 9/6/2016).

¹⁵ A group exhibition title 'Materiality'. 22-27 July 2014.



Figure 5: Rose petals installation¹⁶

In this installation, I continued to develop the relationship between plastic and clay as first piece: Eight Hours. I liked the porcelain rose petals to be protected in a safe place. They were just little pieces of hand modelled clay and not slip casts based on actual rose petals, the porcelain rose petals were made by my fingerprints one by one.

Plastic tubes were used as 'the skin' of my porcelain artwork, because in this work I did not glaze the petals. I fired rose petals in batches at different temperatures from 1000 °c to 1260 °c to get the result of colour variation. However, I randomly mixed up all those rose petals when I displayed my work. It deconstructed my unique identity into the tubes.

I used eight plastic tubes to represent the eight hours time gap between Taiwan and Britain (Figure 6), therefore I decided to not make the rose petals fill the whole tubes, but just to fill them half way. From this arrangement, the installation

¹⁶ Wen-Hsi Chen, Rose petals installation, porcelain, handmade. Size: 120x50x30 cm. Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi

showed the visible part which was rose petals in the tubes, and the invisible part which was the air also sharing this space.



Figure 6: Rose petals installation¹⁷

During my exhibition, one of my visitors was asked me whether my work related to 'Disney princess'¹⁸ or anything related to feminism. It was a very interesting conversation about Disney culture because each princess seems to suffer from some experience, for example: Cinderella is bullied by her stepmother and stepsister, the Little Mermaid gives her sweetest voice to a witch to be close to her prince. It seems 'suffering' is the process to find personal identity and sacrifice is part of the negotiating process. It reminded me of my situation living in Britain. I sacrificed my time with my family and have experienced a lot of 'strange' things. For me, the brighter the colour the more it is associated with greater sadness. For example: pink, I never associated this colour with Disney princess because I did not grow up in the Disney culture. However, some people do live in the Disney context. For me pink has Japanese associations. It was a fascinating process to become aware of how parts of the world are not familiar with each other's context, so my creative practice provided a platform to explore these issues and exchange

¹⁷ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi

¹⁸ The History Behind Disney Princesses. The Artifice.[Online]Available from: <http://the-artifice.com/history-behind-disney-princesses/> (Accessed on 9 June 2016)

cultures. I used my fingerprints as a collective identity from me. My rose petals suggested I made an object by hand which was a profoundly political act. Also, my rose petals helped me to speak of my living in-between as a fragile and lowly position and in some way they look like they are very sweet and edible (approachable). See (Figure 7)



Figure 7: The details of rose petals¹⁹

¹⁹ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi

Appendix 8: The Guldagergaard artist-residency

My husband, Martin Harman, also got the opportunity to attend the artist residency in Denmark so we went together. This was three months after my back surgery, and it was the first time I had touched clay for some time. I was very excited about it. They arranged our studio spaces nearby each other.

During this artist-residency, I have received a couple of cultural shocks; my first shock was the 'unofficial rule' that everyone would take in turn to cook dinner for the group and eat together. Eating food together every night helped save money and also allowed the exchange of culture through the food. All the other artists had arrived a month earlier than us so they were already used to this system and had had time to build up the relationship.

When it was my turn to cook the dinner, I tried to create a Taiwanese meal. Fortunately, I brought some Taiwanese ingredients with me, but I had to try to create the sauces by myself using what I could find in the local supermarket. It took me all day to prepare a meal and on a tight budget. This meal was very challenging for most of artists, because they already had opinions about 'Chinese' food. They did not realize that Taiwanese food¹ is different to Chinese food. Also, most of them had Western stereotypical expectations of what Chinese food should be like. Chef Hom explains that 'Chinese food at the beginning of the 80s was sweet and sour pork, mainly. Most Brits had a very stereotypical view of Chinese food.'²

For my Taiwanese food night (Figure 1), I prepared Taiwanese tea and I cooked '臺灣麵線 Taiwanese noodles' sent by my mother from Taiwan. One artist said: 'it

¹ Wong, Maggie Hiufu '40 Taiwanese foods we can't live without'. *CNN*. 27 July, 2015. [Online] Available from: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/07/23/travel/40-taiwan-food/> [Accessed 21 November 2016].

² Warwicker, Michelle 'How the UK fell in love with Chinese food'. *BBC Food*. 6 May 2014. [Online] Available from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/0/27164636> [Accessed 21 November 2016].

is too disgusting' because she had never eaten noodles so thin and long. I was very shocked by her directness.



Figure 1: My Taiwanese food night.³

The other artists also struggled to prepare vegetarian food for us, which brought some tension to the table. One artist mentioned that she needed to eat 'meat' at every dinner otherwise she did not feel she had eaten properly. After dinner, the other artists would play cards or watch films together. However, Martin and I always got up early in the morning to start work so we wanted to go to bed early. Unfortunately, the other artists interpreted this as if we were unsocial, and that as we were a couple and we needed personal time.

Then there was a second shock. I had undertaken this artist-residency because I wanted to do research. I was very serious about 'being an artist' for one month and my husband too. We cared about this unique opportunity. For us, it was not a holiday, it was a development and progression process to our art career. I

³ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

spent most of my time in the studio because the studio was opened 24 hours. I asked other artists why they decided to undertake this residency, the answers surprised me, especially one artist who said: 'for a holiday, I am an art teacher and I need time to relax.'. Others said: 'I never leave my country, this was my first time trip to Europe' and 'because my MA degree needs to have artist-residency credit', 'I do not know how to create ceramics so I have come in to learn'.

Those reasons made me realise this artist-residency was not focused on people seriously wanting to be an artist. This artist-residency is encouraging people to come in and experience how to look like 'an artist'. I also realized that I could not experience Danish culture, because most of the artists were not Danish. We were living in an international atmosphere. Therefore, I started to look at Danish food, because this was the only way I could get close to Danish culture.

I found the Danish pastry was my chosen subject and 'comfort food'⁴ (see Figures 2 and 3). I never saw such 'big' pastries before and they tasted very delicious. I was wondering how can I transfer these pastries to my ceramic work? So, my residency research was changed to the theme of the 'Danish pastry' as a way to express myself in Denmark.

⁴ Romm, Cari 'Why Comfort food comforts'. *Atlantic*, 3 April 2015. [Online] Available from: <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/04/why-comfort-food-comforts/389613/> [Accessed 22 November 2016].



Figure 2: Danish pastry.⁵



Figure3: Danish pastry.⁶

I also visited Odense, I found this Danish pastry sign on one of the buildings (Figure 4).

⁵ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

⁶ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.



Figure 4: Danish pastry.⁷

The following group of photographs shows my progression process and finished works from my Danish pastry ceramic work. In the beginning, I created my ceramic form very similar to a real Danish pastry. I ended up making circles of clay but that does not really look like a Danish pastry. I took out one of the crossover pieces in the display. I simplified the circular shape as being characteristic of the Danish pastry (see Figure 5, Figure 6, Figure 7, Figure 8).

⁷ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.



Figure 5: My handmade ceramic Danish pastry. ⁸



Figure 6: Chen, Wen-Hsi, The Danish pastry. ⁹

⁸ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

⁹ Chen, Wen-Hsi . The Danish pastry. Size: 25x 27 x 8 cm. Stoneware. Sculpture. 2015.



Figure 7: My handmade ceramic Danish pastry.¹⁰



Figure 8: I carved Plum flowers and then hand-painted the colour.¹¹

¹⁰ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

¹¹ Photograph by Harman, Martin.

My central idea was the Danish pastry and I used my time at the residency to create a link between Denmark and Taiwan in a cross-cultural situation. I created a series of Danish pastry sculptures, and then carved and painted the Taiwanese national flowers (Plum flower 梅花) pattern into the surface (see Figure 9). I felt very disappointed with myself for using a pattern on the surface of my ceramics.

Jiang explores the plum flower as a symbol of strength in Asian culture:

The plum blossom has been an important symbol in Chinese culture. As a 'friend of winter', the plum blossom most vividly represents the value of endurance, as life ultimately overcomes through the vicissitude of time. The fragrance of plum blossoms comes from the bitterness and coldness, as the Chinese saying goes. Souls are tempered in the depth of experience, growing in inner strength and unyielding courage... Unity of culture and nature has been an important part of the Chinese tradition, and elements of nature embody important cultural values.¹².

¹² Jiang, Hong 'The plum blossom-a symbol of strength'. *Epoch Times*, 12 June 2012. [Online] Available from: <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/1497107-the-plum-blossom-a-symbol-of-strength/> [Accessed 20 November 2016].



Figure 9: Hand-painting Taiwanese national flowers.¹³

My Taiwanese national flower meets Danish pastry, I also carved the name: Skælskør to highlight my location in Denmark. Being an unknown artist in a foreign country noted for its pastries inspired me to use this theme during the artist residency. In the end, I left my Danish pastries in an unknown forest to respond to my situation, as unknown, living in-between (Figure 10).



Figure 10: My ceramic Danish pastry in Guldagergaard.¹⁴

¹³ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

I created eight pieces during my artist-residency for a ceramic festival. Martin and I were invited to show our residency work in the ceramic festival in Skælskør in Denmark on 15 July 2015 (see Figure 11).



Figure 11: Poster for the ceramic festival in Skælskør.¹⁵

I shared the stand with my husband (see Figures 12 and 13).

¹⁴ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

¹⁵ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.



Figure 12: Martin Harman's blue cups and my Danish pastries.¹⁶



Figure 13: Photo of our stand in ceramic festival in Skælskør.¹⁷

I was also invited to speak about my research, as part of the festival programme (Figure 14).

¹⁶ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

¹⁷ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

Exploring Taiwanese cultural identity through contemporary ceramic practice

Wen-hsi Harman

PhD Candidate in Ceramics, Bath Spa University, UK. 16 July 2015

Guldagergaard International Ceramic Research Center.



Figure 14: The first page of my presentation PPT.¹⁸

I showed them my field trip documentary video, and how I developed this relationship between the research and my studio practice. I observed that some Danish ladies seemed very interested in the Taiwanese indigenous Amis pottery.

I was very surprised that all the local audience were female makers. I was wondering where are the male makers in Denmark? This gender issue was very interesting. It reminded me that in the 19th century there was a major industry of black pottery made by women. As Vincentelli explains:

Denmark has one of the best recorded female pottery traditions thanks to the strong commitment to the documentation of folk customs in Scandinavian countries. Women were still practicing potters reliant largely on a tourist/collectors market in the 1930s and, in a sense, this has not been entirely extinguished as the technique continues to be demonstrated by women at the Historical and Archaeological Research Centre at Lejre near Copenhagen.¹⁹

¹⁸ Photograph by Chen, Wen-Hsi.

¹⁹ Vincentelli, Moira 'Black pottery of Denmark' in *Women Potters: Transforming Traditions*. London: A and C Black, 2003, p. 20.

Thus, in one month of this residency I found a form associated with Danish culture and related it to my own practice, I used my fingerprints to create a sculptural form. I had no opportunity to experience 'happiest' with Danish people. However, I did experience living 'in-between'; most artists had already built a relationship with the other artists before we arrived. In other words, my living 'in-between' was not just about Taiwan and Denmark, it was also about 'fitting in' with the already -established group in Guldagergaard. It was multiple 'in-betweens'. It was an interesting experience during my artistic residency in Demark with ten artists from countries including Japan, Canada, the USA and Finland.

Appendix 9: Feedback from Taiwan

1. [name redacted]

The very first time I saw Wen-Hsi's work, I immediately realized she's an artist who subverted the Chinese culture and the general perceptions of ceramic. After all, the general public usually believe that ceramics are closely related to our daily lives and the production of the ceramic works is linked to living habits. Unlike others, Wen-Hsi took a nontraditional approach by incorporating the inconspicuous "fingerprint" into her work. With her experience abroad, she had her own reasoning toward the Eastern and Western cultural clash and the distinction between genders in different generations (In her work, the blue and the pink color symbolized the revolution of hierarchy between men and women. The color pink used to represent a nobleman and high social status during the middle ages. It wasn't until the beginning of the 20th century, when people started to give a clear distinction about girls wearing pink and boys wear blue). She further expressed her own feelings for Taiwan through the ceramic production process, the application of force and extrusion, in order to discuss self-identity and values in this environment. From a spectators' point of view, it is extremely difficult for us to determine whether or not there is an absolute answer since it has such complex feelings in it. It certainly leaves us rooms for imagination and introspection, although deep but meaningful. There is no definite answer to her work, it simply leaves us room to explore. The topic is serious but it's not about right or wrong, it is about thinking outside the box for us Asians.

2. [name redacted] visits the exhibition "Identity: The Language Of Ceramics".

"Flow" is an intriguing philosophy. It is also my direct sentiment toward ceramics. So what exactly is "Flow"? Is it the ceramic words echoing the 3:30pm scattering sunshine? Or could it be the puzzling time fleeing between the gloomy England and the hometown? Focusing on the elapsed traditional art in a tiny populated ceramic town. The western aestheticism meets the Eastern soundless luxuriousness through

the artist's diamond eyes. The "Flow" in life consists of disaggregation, remodification, enthusiasm and pulsation. It is a brand new ceramic appearance connecting the past and the present, East and West, ideal and reality.

3. [name redacted]

Since I was little, my only knowledge to the concept of ceramics are from books. I thought ceramic is usually a hobby for scholars, or an activity couples would do together, just like in the movie "Unchained Melody". I never had much association with the art. However, it wasn't until my friend, Wen-Hsi, who graduated from an art related major with a concentration in ceramics, helps widen my horizon. This is the first time I notice there are institutions out there specialize in teaching ceramic art. The first time I know many people around the globe other than people in Yingge, Taiwan, are doing ceramics as well. Due to Wen-Hsi's exhibition, I know for the very first time that Taiwan constantly hosts international exhibition and competitions, which incentivizes ceramic masters from all over the world to participate. The most impressive part of Wen-Hsi's works is her ability to show that ceramics are not only about making containers like mugs or vases, it can be made into pieces of beautiful words, which can be linked to a beautiful scenery for people to truly experience the beauty of Chinese words. Furthermore, the mixture of gold into pottery clay and a touch of glaze transforms her work into a dazzling art. Wen-Hsi's unique art work represents her life and cultural experiences, and shows her love for pottery.

4. [name redacted]

I see an explicit national identity to the land of Formosa through Wen-Hsi's work despite living in England. Each hand shaping clay in different shapes and sizes represents the uniformity of ethnic groups in Taiwan, which are so closely bonded. The kiln color was also carefully thought out. The color red symbolizes passion. The detailed decisions had to be made starting from step one, which was to decide the types of clay, followed by the shapes, sizes and colors, as well as the implied meanings the artist wanted to get across. We see how the artist uses ceramic as a

channel to speak out her love for the dearly missed island, Taiwan. As a Taiwanese or a foreigner, we all hope to learn more about this magnificent land through Wen-Hsi's work.

5. [name redacted]

You can see Wen-Hsi's life observations and how much she misses hometown through her work. From the ceramic words floating in the air of the glass corridor to varieties of banana arts, as if it enters into Wen-Hsi's train of thoughts. Those words got stuck in my mind as it drips down from top to bottom like the rain drops. The Chinese words can be reassembled according to viewer's intention, in order to accomplish multi-layering and direct interaction with the viewers. Although we are seeing Wen-Hsi's work, we always end up finding her and ourselves in it.

6. [name redacted]

On February 28th, 2016, I visited the New Taipei City Yingge Ceramics Museum for Wen-Hsi Chen's exhibition, "Identity: The Language Of Ceramics". Wen-Hsi is from Taiwan, and she currently resides in England. During the period from 20 February 2016 to 15 March 2016, she came back to her hometown, Taiwan, to create ceramic words and potteries. I see a distinctive Taiwanese indigenous culture through her work. The ceramic and calligraphy elements in "Ceramic Words" creates a unique visual experiences for the viewers. Moreover, Wen-Hsi immerses the Eastern (Taiwan) and Western (England) culture, creating a significant and meaningful ceramic art.

Wen-Hsi's exhibition displays how hard she has been working for her goal in English, she is trying to use her power to showcase Taiwan to the rest of the world. Her perseverance really touched me. She allows me to know another side of "Taiwan" as well as "Art and Ceramics". I am proud to be a fellow Taiwanese as her!

7. [name redacted]

The spoon collection intrigues me with its structure. Spoon is an often seen utensil in our daily life, normally people won't pay much attention to it. When using it, the spoon relies on human hands to control and balance the focal point of the handle with force. In Wen-Hsi's spoon collection, it illustrates the most valuable focal point being the front sunken part of the spoon. All the forces and values pinpoints that one particular spot from top to bottom. The spoon no longer serves as a tool, no longer is an object being used by human, it symbolizes the establishment of cross cultural relationships and the meaning served behind the spoon.

8. [name redacted]

I visited Wen-Hsi, who just returned from England, at her studio in the Yingge Ceramic museum this year. It felt extremely warm when seeing the ceramic words that's half complete lying there on her work desk.

As we getting closer to the showroom, I saw the Chinese words installation art outside of the glass window from a distance. For a ceramic artist like myself, who spent 20 years in the United States, I totally understand her desire to blend in her root with what she learned in England. The classic Chinese words were presenting in a modern installation art form.

The Wen-Hsi I knew, she works hard discovering the cultural differences between Taiwan and England. She has been trying to come up with her own definition of its placement.

9. [name redacted]

The finger print series has always been my favorite. The color and the land, the self-identification, the cultural differences and the self-valuation, without any impurities, all it left was the purist thought.

In her ceramic words collection, words meant to me as a symbol for languages. It is also a tool to jot down memories. Creators uses clays to describe each individual Chinese words, it allows me to see the beauty from its structure without intervening by the meaning of it. The exhibition showcases the art hanging up high with a glass

walkway beneath it, every single whitish words seem to be so fragile but so powerful. The arrangements of the words even connect all the dots for the viewers. The art is a channel for the artist to speak out their mind. Unlike calligraphy, which viewers need to understand the shape as well as the meanings. The ceramic words can be a piece of art on its own without understanding the meaning behind it. Wen-Hsi's exhibition definitely serves as a wakeup call and helps me to re-think about the shapes and meanings of every single Chinese words behind it.

Appendix 10: Comment on Wen-Hsi CHEN's Exploring Taiwanese Cultural Identity through Contemporary Ceramic Practice

Jiyi RYU (University of York)

Wen-Hsi CHEN's artistic practice and her essay as an artist statement can be understood as part-participant observation record and part-autoethnography. Her own practice in ceramics is an intervention into the Taiwanese traditional culture and social norm, considering the fact that female role has been limited to decorating part in the overall process of making ceramics in Taiwan. As Stuart Hall made a distinction between 'Theory' and the verb 'theorising' and also regarded theory as action, theory does not have critical meanings within itself, but rather through theoretical practices, critical meanings of theory can be achieved. Wen-Hsi CHEN's making and writing have a practical purpose, and she seems to be trying to make her academic work and artistic practice an active verb.

Considering the issue of tradition and authenticity, and contested identities and representations in contemporary society, I would like to suggest the artist-cum-writer to draw from academic discourses on the interrelation between tourism and postcolonialism as well as tourism and modernity in order to elaborate her discussion. In addition, we need to reexamine identity politics of the minority and their traditional pottery as a souvenir in the context of 'Unescofication' in the era of globalisation. Not only making pottery but also tourism is a sort of social action. Along with social transitions in modern Taiwan, the Amis community and their traditional pottery making are experiencing a wave of change. In terms of tourism industry, the Amis is attempting the commodification of pottery beyond its original functions in everyday life. Moreover, this kind of pottery is collected and displayed inside museums or art galleries as a representative of a particular culture.

In Wen-Hsi CHEN's essay, the interplay of ethnicity, gender and class is critical. The Alik Studio was founded by a man from the Amis and the commodification process

of their community was promoted by him (one man), whereas the Amis traditional pottery still has been made by female hands according to their tradition, which is starkly different from that of the majority in Taiwan. Even though the women are makers and own their craftsmanship, they seem to be under the gendered control, in this case under the management of a male studio manager. Accordingly, more detailed relationships between the women as makers and the man as a manager, in particular the analysis of gender and hierarchy, are needed.

I would like to raise an issue of writing textual history of the Amis traditional pottery as a part of Taiwanese art history or broader Asian design history in that the Amis does not have textual and archival culture. Furthermore, we need to examine writing of the indigenous art and culture in the context of 'world art history' and 'global art history', which are recently emerging concepts, while analysing the cultural meaning of Taiwanese ceramics and pottery and its relationship with identities. Both national art history and the nation-state are modern products, and national art history has been the field of aesthetic nationalism. In the process of writing national art history, major narratives tend to forget or erase the minority of a society. Therefore, it is required to reconsider not only the context of postcolonial Taiwan but the exclusion and insertion of inner-colonial groups such as the Amis in nationally bound narratives.

18 July 2013